

1998

# A Cross-Site Inquiry Into Reading Instruction in Differentially Successful Title I Schools.

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*Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College*

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**A CROSS-SITE INQUIRY  
INTO READING INSTRUCTION IN DIFFERENTIALLY  
SUCCESSFUL TITLE I SCHOOLS**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

**The Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

**by  
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December 1998**



**UMI Number: 9922057**

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## **To Teachers**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Reading was not an easy skill for me to master. There are times when I still transpose numbers and letters, as was pointed out by one of my peer debriefers. Were it not for persistent nuns and wonderful teachers, I might have missed many wonderful opportunities. The doors of literacy opened the world to me in the most mystical ways. To my teachers, I am truly grateful.

As a doctoral student, I have come to know educators who helped me transition this terminal degree journey from a process to an event. To them I acknowledge my gratitude. To my cohorts who now hold the doctor of philosophy degree, I salute you. Dr. Fran Crochet, Dr. Pat Caillouet, and our revered leader, Dr. Debbie Rickards were model students whose generosity knew no bounds. To my cohorts who are still works in progress, it has been my pleasure to learn from you and share the wisdom of Debbie, Pat, and Fran. Pat Duhon, Lucy Begnaud, and Cathy Daniel, thank you for finding the flaws and helping me to create opportunities to make new mistakes.

In memory of Dr. Peter Soderbergh, I will continue to strive to attain the high standard of excellence he espoused. To Dr. Earl Cheek and Dr. Charles Teddlie, I humbly convey my eternal gratitude and indebtedness. To Dr. Byron Launey, Dr. Wilson Marston, and Dr. Mary Sue Garay, I strive to reach your level of professionalism; you serve as models for doctoral candidates who aspire to reach your status.

Final appreciation goes to my family: Kristin, Mark, Faye, Alice, Bob, and Kirby; and to my furry friends, Clyde and Sam, who entered my “war room” when no one else dared; and to dearest Bobby, my most predictable and loyal supporter.

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## **ABSTRACT**

By design, elementary schools are places where students perform specified tasks and become literate. In practice, elementary schools enroll students who engage in instructional activity, yet many of these students fail to reach minimum literacy standards. This multiple-case qualitative inquiry focused on the inner workings of schools where students placed at risk learned to read and examined schools where similar students did not learn to read. Research conducted in four elementary schools addressed the following questions: (a) What resources, time factors, and management systems do elementary teachers use to create an effective reading environment? (b) How do reading assessment measures and practices inform instruction? (c) Within the school context, what is the level of continuity in reading instruction from one classroom to the next?

Four general findings emerged in response to the research questions. First, material resources were in short supply; and teachers did not utilize instructional-level appropriate materials to facilitate independent work. Human resources were squandered. In the majority of cases, ancillary teacher behaviors were counterproductive to student learning. These support personnel were scheduled inefficiently and were inadequately monitored, yet frequent principal classroom visitations positively impacted student and teacher performance. Second, management and use of time were not maximized in the two unsuccessful schools. In the two successful schools, learning time was extended by thirty minutes each day as a result of efficient time management; upper grades were departmentalized; and at one school, pull-out rather than inclusion was implemented for



specialized instruction. Third, assessment practices limited rather than informed instruction. Teachers used intuition for informal assessment and inconsistent documentation for reporting. Finally, continuity was apparent at one site, Star One School, where grade-level teachers implemented like-reading instruction within each of the six grade levels. In the final analysis, this was the only school in the inquiry demonstrating aspects of successful reading instruction.

Implicit in these findings is the need for further study. Yet insight can be gained; and students placed at risk could conceivably attend schools where factors within our control, such as those uncovered in this inquiry, would cease to interfere with their learning.

## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study reflects my concern for students placed at risk who are not learning to read in school. Only 15% of Louisiana's public school fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level on the reading portion of the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and 60% of the state's fourth graders performed below the basic level on that test. Many deficient readers fall into categories for which they are labeled "at-risk." Consequently, a large proportion of the children in Louisiana schools are not prepared to take their rightful places as productive citizens in society. Stringfield and Hollifield (1996) describe these as "students placed at risk," a label intended to make the distinction that the fault lies not within the students but within a system that exacerbates their problems. Many of these students live below the poverty threshold of \$17,329 for a family of three as indicated on the Income Eligibility Guidelines (see Appendix A); are confronted with cultural and language differences, race differences, family and community differences; and attend schools that do not consistently impact their learning.

The failure of schools to educate students in the basic skill of reading is alarmingly curious considering the resources that are available to them. For the past thirty years, schools with enrollments of large numbers of disadvantaged children have been granted billions of dollars in supplemental financial assistance under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to subsidize educational

programming for low-achieving, impoverished children. The Title I federal compensatory education program, initially funded in 1965, was renamed Chapter 1 in the 1980s, and reverted to the name Title I in 1994.

During the 1996-97 school year, for example, over seven billion federal dollars were allocated to Title I schools in the United States through the ESEA Title I. Yet some schools continue to fail, even with additional resources designated for these high-poverty schools to remediate students and accelerate learning.

TheodoreSizer (1996) has studied schools and school reform for years. In Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School, he lambasts schools and policymakers for failing to address the needs of students. "Kids are not on conveyer belts, with teachers hanging knowledge on them as they pass by. Schools do not 'deliver instructional services,' pumping up intellectual tires and delivering pedagogical pizza. Children—blessedly—are more complicated and thus more interesting than that" (p. xiii).

Hence, the object of my study was schools. The problem under investigation was reading instruction in Title I schools with differing academic achievement levels. This qualitative research project was an inductive study of inquiry to discern the similarities and differences in these diverse learning places.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This multiple case study was designed to describe and analyze reading instruction in four Title I elementary schools, two successful schools with high achievement scores and two unsuccessful schools with low achievement scores, and to conduct a cross-case

analysis of aspects of reading to elicit themes that connect cases, as well as themes that provide contrast between cases. The purpose of the study was to gain understanding of what occurs in a district that contains schools where students use reading to learn as well as schools where similar students do not learn to read.

Title I program implementation was not the object of this inquiry. Having Title I as a stated part of the dissertation title served to describe the purposeful criterion sampling technique employed in this qualitative study. Title I schools, enrolling high percentages of students who live in households with income below poverty level, satisfied the criterion of low socio-economic status schools. Additionally, having “differentially successful” in the title disclosed that outlier schools with extremely high and extremely low outcome scores were the target of the inquiry using extreme or deviant sampling (Patton, 1990). Therefore, reading instruction with low income students in achieving and non-achieving schools is the focus of this inquiry.

### The District

Read Independent School District (pseudonym) is a county school district located in the state of Louisiana, where counties are known as parishes. The rectangularly-shaped parish is located in the southeast section of the state and rests along the eastern border of the Mississippi River. The parish encompasses 400 square miles, and, according to the 1990 U.S. Census, had a population of 398,661. The large area is comprised of urban, suburban, and rural community types. During the 1996-97 school year, elementary school attendance areas in the district were changed to community-sensitive attendance zones as a result of the district’s revised desegregation court order.

These changes had dramatic impact on families and professional educators. At that time there were ninety-nine public schools in the district serving 55,640 students, 71% of whom came from homes with income below the poverty level. Fifty-one of the ninety-nine district schools participated in the Title I program, which entitled these schools to supplemental funding to improve student achievement.

District administrators voiced concern with the actual performance of schools; that is, how variables over which the school has no control affect outcome data. To get a clearer picture, the district utilized Relative Performance Indicator (RPI) data for each school in the district. The RPI data were calculated through a regression analysis. “Regression is used to assess the contribution of one or more ‘causing’ variables (independent variables) to one ‘caused’ variable (dependent variable). It is also used to predict the value of one variable from the values of others” (Voelker & Orton, 1993, p.119). Five variables were used to predict a combined score from criterion-referenced-tests (CRT) and norm-referenced-tests (NRT): (a) socioeconomic factors, (b) community type, (c) percent special-education students, (d) percent language-minority students, and (e) percent gifted students. As a result, schools had an RPI score in addition to CRT and NRT scores. Positive RPIs indicated that the school exceeded prediction, while negative RPIs indicated that the school fell below prediction. The average RPI was 0.00, with a standard deviation of 1.00.

In selecting the schools for participation in this study, the RPI was a major factor; however, other issues were taken into consideration, such as district-level input regarding

equitable racial composition of school principals; school participation in other studies; past administrative effectiveness; and each principal's willingness to participate.

### The Schools

Using the most current comprehensive data, four elementary schools were chosen from among thirty-nine possible Title I elementary schools in the district. Pseudonyms were used for these schools, which were selected partially because of their extreme outcome data rankings. Two high ranking schools, Star One (see Appendix B for school profile) and Star Two (see Appendix C for school profile), were considered successful, and two low ranking schools, Hope Two (see Appendix D for school profile) and Hope One (see Appendix E for school profile), were deemed unsuccessful for the purposes of this study. Two of the schools are located in neighborhoods within an inner-city setting (Star Two and Hope Two), and two of the schools are located in a more rural setting (Star One and Hope One).

Star One School. At the onset of this study, Star One had a student population of over 550 students, with 70% coming from homes below the poverty threshold. The racial composition was 66% African American and 34% White. Ninety-five percent of the students came to school daily. Over the previous three years the school had suspended an average of ten students per year. An average of twenty-five students per year were retained. There were no students labeled as gifted, and an average of twelve students per year were enrolled in self-contained special education. Star One had an RPI rating of +1.2797, which was the highest RPI of all the elementary schools in the district. This

included twenty-one non-Title I elementary schools which did not have high-poverty student bodies.

The principal of Star One was responsible for observing and evaluating forty teachers who were on staff. Of that number, fifteen were responsible for teaching reading to students in kindergarten through fifth grades. The fourth and fifth grades were departmentalized, with one teacher fulfilling the reading and language arts teaching roles at those grade levels. According to the principal, this stable faculty had a consistently low level of absenteeism since she became principal of the school six years ago.

Star Two School. Star Two enrolled 330 students, 100% of whom were African American. Ninety-two percent of the student body came from homes where the combined income was below the poverty threshold. Over 95% of the students attended schools on a daily basis with only two suspensions per year during the past three years. Since the 1994-95 school year, approximately twenty-five students per year were retained. There was no gifted program at Star Two, and six students were assigned to self-contained special education classes. Fifteen of the thirty teachers on staff teach reading at Star Two. The fourth and fifth grades were departmentalized, which allowed for one teacher to fulfill the reading and language arts teaching role at grade level; fourth-grade students were taught reading by their homeroom teachers. The principal, in her fourth year of rebuilding this school, was highly regarded for reducing the negative reputation of the school.

There were only two Title I elementary schools, in addition to Star One, scoring at least one standard deviation above average on the RPI. For this reason, Star Two's RPI

rating of  $+0.6820$  was considered successful. Only one non-Title I elementary school in the district scored one standard deviation above average. The score for that non-Title I school was  $+0.5675$ , which is lower than three of the district's Title I schools. Of the four participating schools, Star Two was the least affected by the revised desegregation court order.

Hope Two School. Hope One and Hope Two were representative of many schools which scored poorly on the RPI. In addition to low performance scores on their CRTs and NRTs, Hope One scored an RPI of  $-1.8554$  and Hope Two scored  $-1.3583$ . Of the thirty-nine elementary Title I schools in the district, there were nineteen Title I elementary schools scoring one standard deviation below average or lower on the RPI scale.

There were over 425 students who attended Hope Two, with an average of 95% of them attending daily. The student body was composed of 72% African American and 28% White students. An average of twenty students per year over the previous three years had failed to be promoted to the next grade, with an average suspension rate of five students per year during the same time frame. Fifty-one percent of these students were on "free lunch," which documented that they came from homes where the level of income was below poverty. Prior to the implementation of the revised desegregation court order, Hope Two housed approximately one hundred students in the self-contained gifted program. During the 1996-97 school year, this program was moved to other locations in the district. In the same school year, the self-contained special education program increased to twenty-six students, a marked increase over the previous two-year



enrollment of twelve students per year. The highly regarded principal oversaw a total of thirty-seven teachers, thirteen of whom were regular classroom teachers who taught reading to kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) students.

With court-ordered changes in student-attendance zones, the professional staff continued to have difficulty adjusting to the dramatic demographic shift in student population. Having changed from a 25% gifted population to a 51% low-income population with no professional preparation caused many problems. Many of the teachers requested transfers, and at the end of the 1997-98 school year the principal announced her retirement with twenty-five years of professional service.

Hope One School. When this study was initiated Hope One had a small student body of just over 200 students, 90% of whom were on “free lunch”—a low-poverty designation. The ratio of African American students to White students was 99% to 1%. The average daily attendance rate was 97%, which had been maintained over the previous three years. No students were suspended from the school during the 1994-95 and 1995-96 school years; however, five students were suspended during the 1996-97 school year. The average rate of student retentions for the past three years was two students per year. Self-contained special education accounted for approximately twenty-two students per year over the past three years. There was no gifted program at Hope One. Of the twenty-five teachers on staff at Hope One, twelve regular classroom teachers were responsible for teaching reading to students in kindergarten through fifth grades. The principal was in her first year at the school with a relatively new student body due to a court-ordered configuration change from kindergarten, fourth, fifth grades (K, 4-5) in

1995-96 to the present K-5 configuration. In addition, many new faculty took classroom assignments during that school year. With a different group of students, a replacement principal, and many new teachers, this school was re-establishing itself.

### **Significance of the Study**

Over forty years ago, Rudolph Flesch (1955) emerged as a forceful advocate for the use of phonics in reading instruction in his book, Why Johnny Can't Read and What You Can Do About It, which he wrote specifically for parents. Though professionals in the field of reading did not take him seriously, other stakeholders shared his disenchantment with the state of reading instruction. Time has passed, phonics has resurfaced (Adams, 1990), and the outcry from stakeholders grows louder. The Public Affairs Research Council (1997) strongly recommended solutions to break the cycle of placing the children of Louisiana at risk, the first of which is:

The most important thing Louisiana can do to break the cycle of failure is to focus on the elementary level and target its resources to guarantee that every child will learn to read by the end of the third grade. This should not be too much to expect of an education system that taxpayers support to the tune of \$3.5 billion annually. A child cannot learn history, science, math, and other subjects if he or she cannot read (p. 3).

This qualitative inquiry was significant from the perspective of looking closely, listening carefully, documenting accurately, and reporting clearly what occurred in schools where children learn to read. Of course, it was just as important to employ the same intensity in studying what went on in schools where children did not learn to read.

Once these similarities and differences are brought to light and pondered deeply, perhaps instructional insights can be gained, and students placed at risk can attend schools where risk factors such as these do not interfere with their learning.

### **Research Questions**

**The following questions served to structure and guide this research study.**

**Frequent review of these questions promoted constancy of purpose in achieving the goals of this research study:**

- (a) What resources, time factors, and management systems do elementary teachers use to create an effective reading environment?**
- (b) How do reading assessment measures and practices inform instruction?**
- (c) Within the context of each participating school, what is the level of continuity in reading instruction from one classroom to the next?**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

What practices in reading instruction are successfully employed with elementary school students? How are environments created to facilitate reading success? What assessment practices are utilized to measure reading progress and inform instruction? And what does the literature provide about successes in Title I Programs? In a review of the literature for this study, these questions are addressed with findings under the following topics: (a) reading success in elementary schools, (b) effective environment for learning to read in the elementary school, (c) meaningful assessments in elementary reading instruction, and (d) successful Title I programming.

#### **Reading Success in Elementary Schools**

School entry is not the beginning of development or of education in its broadest sense, but it is the beginning of society's formal attempts to instruct all children in groups, in skills that are considered important (Clay, 1991). Generally accepted as most important of the skills is learning to read, and then reading to learn (Chall, 1983). In a larger sense, language (speaking, listening, reading, or writing) in any form represents an external conventionalized system of communication that exists prior to the child's entry into society. Language contains a great many devices, forms, and presuppositions that characterize it as a tool of communication (Bruner, 1984). Upon entering the formal school setting, the young child's challenge is to engage in message-getting, problem-solving activities which increase in power and flexibility the more they are practiced (Clay, 1991). During the first three years of schooling, teachers create environments in

which instructional programs are implemented and learning is communicated. “By the child’s third year of formal schooling, the eight-year-old is expected to be (a) tuned to the meaning of texts, (b) eager to talk and read and write, (c) able to compose and write simple texts; and, (d) able to read narrative and non-narrative texts” (Clay, 1991, p.10).

Because of the way schools are designed, teachers bear the main responsibility for students’ meeting these educational expectations. Nonetheless, according to Clay (1991), effective teaching is an interaction—albeit one with major aspects occurring outside the teacher’s control and within the student. Thus, appropriate classroom settings and relevant assessment systems are vital to the adequate facilitation of this interaction. These fundamental components, coupled with clear program goals focusing on individual needs, are considered the most conducive structures to reading success for young children.

### Goals for Success in Reading

Unconventional literacy development which occurs prior to formal schooling is the precursor of conventional reading development. Since the mid-1980s the term “emergent literacy” has been accepted as the descriptor for this period in literacy development. Sulzby (1991) defines emergent literacy as the reading and writing concepts, behaviors, and dispositions that precede and develop into conventional reading and writing. Emergent literacy stresses the continuities between emergent and conventional reading, between the concerns and issues traditionally associated with reading teachers, and between home and school environments (Teale, 1995).

Precepts regarding emergent literacy are: (a) Learning to read and write begins very early in life when children use legitimate reading and writing behaviors in the informal setting of home and community, as well as in preschool or school settings; (b) literacy development is the concurrent and interrelated development of reading, writing, and oral language from the beginning rather than in sequence; (c) literacy occurs in real-life settings; therefore, the meaningful, functional, and purposeful bases of early literacy must be emphasized so that children learn strategies in context and not in isolation; (d) children learn written language through active engagement with their world by interacting socially with adults in writing and reading situations and by exploring print on their own; (e) a broad range of knowledge, dispositions, and strategies is involved in young children becoming literate, including the functions of language and literacy, knowledge of stories and how they work, an understanding of the nature of written language and the development of concepts about print, and phonemic awareness and knowledge of letters and sound-symbol relationships; and (f) generalizations can be made about children's stages of literacy learning, but it is necessary to take into consideration that children become literate at different rates and take very different paths to conventional reading and writing (Teale & Sulzby, 1986).

In addition to these widely accepted , the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers a position concerning appropriate practices for primary grades which include pre-kindergarten through grade two (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1995). These guidelines include the following key points to consider when making decisions about what children are expected to accomplish: (a) Curriculum is

consistent with research on how children learn; (b) curriculum content attends to all domains-social, emotional, cognitive, and physical; (c) curriculum content reflects the needs and interests of individual children within the group while accommodating a broad range of individual differences in prior experiences, maturation rate, styles of learning, needs, and interests; (d) curriculum respects and supports individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity while encouraging positive relationships with children's families; (e) curriculum engages children actively in their own learning; (f) curriculum strengthens children's sense of competence and enjoyment of learning by providing experiences for children to succeed; and (g) the classroom environment allows children to learn through active involvement with each other.

Literacy knowledge is culturally bound both by what children come to know and how they learn, which situates emergent literacy in the sociocultural perspective (McGee & Purcell-Gates, 1997). A basic premise of Vygotsky's theory (cited in Berk & Winsler, 1995) is that all uniquely higher forms of mental activity are derived from social and cultural contexts. Sociocultural theory places strong emphasis on the wide variation in cognitive capacities among human beings. Thus, in creating an environment conducive to literacy learning for young children, individual differences must be taken into account by incorporating design elements for emergent learners regardless of chronological age. The design of the classroom for early learners should incorporate basic elements with the understanding that teachers will allow for flexibility in room design to meet individual student needs.

## **Effective Environment for Learning to Read in the Elementary School**

As young children first enter the classroom from the openness of home and community, learning settings change dramatically; hence, it follows that behaviors will be affected. "Space communicates with people—in a very real sense it tells us how to act and how not to act" (Kritchevsky & Prescott, 1977, p. 9); therefore, creation of physical space becomes a vital part of the learning process. By organizing an environment to support literacy development, resources are provided whereby literacy comes alive and is lived, both by adults and by children (Schickedanz, 1986).

In Planning Environments for Young Children: Physical Space, Kritchevsky and Prescott (1977) detail a research study which found the most effective predictor of early childhood program quality to be physical space, as analyzed by a scheme developed in the course of the three-year study. The authors report that successful programs purposefully link physical-space design with clear goals for scheduling individual, group, teacher-directed, and self-selection activities. Functional space, along with curricular content and room organization, promotes program goals by allowing goal-related behavior to occur. Also, the space itself neither forces behavior which is contrary to goals nor forces the selection of otherwise unimportant or inappropriate activities as a means of coping with space-induced negative behavior.

The elementary classroom is organized by sections representing different types of literacy events. The physical environment must be arranged and kept in order, and time must be scheduled for each child to be involved in reading experiences in different areas of the environment. In the lower-elementary classroom, materials, labels, lists, signs,



and charts help to organize both activities and the space where they occur. In addition, these learning tools provide functional print experiences for children (Schickedanz, 1986). Specific literacy events dictate the use of certain instructional materials. Some of the materials in Figure 2.1 are suggested in More Than ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing (Schickedanz, 1986).

<b>Instructional Materials to Support Literacy</b>	
<b>Literacy Event</b>	<b>Material</b>
Activities that help organize the environment and make classroom life run smoothly	Labels, rules, rebuses Signs, charts, lists <i>Mini-lessons in classroom management</i>
Items commonly used during dramatic play and other kinds of multi-sensory learning activities which include all types of communicative and visual art forms	Print props-money, magazines, maps, containers, theater props Games, art materials, writing materials, computers Puzzles, music, video, movies Cookbooks, recipe cards
Specific literacy skill materials	Many books of varied genres Alphabet materials, sound materials Word-making materials
Materials and special space that support children's realistic literacy behavior	Book Center - paired reading, independent reading Library carpeted space with multiple book copies Writing Center, author's chair, reference books Writing suitcase

Figure 2.1  
Instructional Materials to Support Literacy

The materials that should be selected for children are (a) appealing and interesting, (b) appropriate for their physical capacities, (c) appropriate for their mental and social development, (d) appropriate for use with groups of children, and (e) well-constructed, durable, and safe for the ages of the children in the group (Bronson, 1995). But, most importantly, materials in the elementary classroom must be print-rich and filled

with books of various levels and genres. The literacy-rich classroom communicates the importance of real reading and writing by engaging the child in a variety of print activities throughout the school day.

Additionally, as children in elementary schools move into the conventional literacy hierarchy, standards are available from the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE). IRA/NCTE Standards for English/Language Arts (1996) encourage meaning-making, student choice, student talk, and visual language. In addition, these organizations encourage socialization in the form of technological and informational resources, learning centers, cooperative groups, quality and varied children's literature, and writing materials. Invented spelling, phonics, and word recognition are taught as needed to accomplish meaningful goals, not in isolation as a discrete skill. These materials and teaching techniques would be included in a balanced reading program that integrates whole language with explicit instruction in graphophonic and comprehension strategies (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996). Balanced reading instruction requires a classroom environment and routine designed to include various dimensions of reading development such as phonemic awareness, concepts about print, and appropriate book selection. Components of a balanced reading program include reading aloud, book introduction activities, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, repeated reading, and directed teaching of skills and strategies. A balanced writing program includes writing aloud, shared writing, independent writing, independent writing, and spelling instruction.

In an attempt to make the classroom as authentic as possible, teachers must also address the reality of the world in which the children live. Books, computers, televisions, videos, video games, dance, art, conversation, writing, and drama are all important elements in the visual language referenced in the IRA/NCTE Standards. In promoting the development of language skills from multiple sources, Flood and Lapp (1998) encourage the broadening of traditional conceptualization of literacy from a narrow focus on reading and writing skills to a definition that includes all forms of communicative and visual arts from reading, writing, speaking, and listening to viewing and producing various modes of visual display including dance, art, drama, computer technology, video, movies, and television. With more schools moving into the technological age, inclusion of the communicative and visual arts in the traditional reading classroom appears particularly appropriate at the end of the twentieth century (Flood & Lapp, 1998, p.344). As children move from one grade to the next, each classroom must expand the variety of instructional materials to represent a wider range of leveled reading material.

Program goals should dictate room arrangement. Hansen (1987) examines principles for reading and writing instruction which allow both teachers and students to pursue their goals toward reading and learning from print. She finds that students need (a) time and opportunity to choose books, read, write, think about their reading and writing, and interact with others about their work; (b) a sense of responsibility for their own learning; (c) a classroom setting that allows for working with the teacher, other students, and alone; and (d) a supportive community that fosters diversity and the development of self-confidence and self-esteem. Routman (1991) adds that students as writers need to

feel safe taking risks and need to have a genuine purpose for writing. Such principles call for a classroom that is organized to facilitate direct teaching of reading and writing while promoting active participation, independence, and collaboration.

In the beginning of the school year and each time the environment is markedly changed, teachers need to hold mini-lessons on the process of operating within the changed environment. Students practice how to negotiate within a continually changing environment as their individual needs change. While monitoring activities, teachers are constantly searching for ways to refine the environment to better facilitate student learning (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997).

### Reading

A well-stocked classroom library is the cornerstone of a primary classroom because selecting and reading books occupies most of the students' time. For younger students, books should be arranged with the book covers facing out and at an easily accessible height. Grouping titles by author or subject helps the students to begin discriminating literary genre and author style. For older students, fiction and non-fiction can be grouped separately, alphabetized by author with spines out. Magazines, newspapers, and reference books should also be a part of the collection. A large carpeted area situated away from traffic flow is optimum for whole-class discussions and sharing as well as allowing for comfortable places for students to browse, read on their own, or pair up to enjoy a good book. Small groups can meet here with the teacher for guided reading or shared reading.

## Writing

In every center, paper and pencil are necessary materials for young students for many purposes, such as making grocery lists in the housekeeping center, labeling creations, and making signs near the building blocks. Reference books and word processors, along with writing implements, should be readily available to all students. Since many young students rehearse for writing by drawing (Calkins, 1994), it is important to have an area designated for that purpose with appropriate materials.

For writing, Routman (1991) suggests a meaningful, collaborative, and interactive environment in which the student feels ownership for learning. Additionally, teachers can cluster desks to form groups of four where students can engage in peer conferences while being arranged in the same general area to allow for whole-class teaching. The library area rug serves as a gathering place at the beginning and end of writing sessions. The “author’s chair,” an important part of the carpeted library setting, is for student authors to share their work with classmates. Areas designated for editing, publishing, and exhibiting work are also needed for the writing process. At a strategic location in the classroom the teacher has a writing board, pocket charts, sentence strips, and chart paper (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). These props are used to demonstrate phonological awareness, letter recognition, spelling patterns, letter-sound relations, and words. The teacher conducts mini-lessons to help students work within the environment. These lessons set the tone for calmness by showing the students how they are expected to move in clusters from one space to another, deal with routines such as use and storage of writing folders,

gathering ideas for writing, respond to teacher conferences, seek peer assistance, and respond to one another's writing (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997).

An environment conducive to success in reading for the elementary child is safe and supportive and enables all learners to develop confidence, take risks, learn to work independently, and develop social skills. Traffic patterns exist to define behaviors: (a) quiet no-trespassing behaviors, (b) minimal movement and talking for partner reading, (c) writing conferences, (d) small-group, teacher-directed lessons, (e) and whole-class instruction. An organized, well-designed classroom enables the teacher to observe, support, and meet the learning needs of each child (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

### **Meaningful Assessments in Elementary Reading Instruction**

According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), assessment has a number of general purposes that form a continuum moving from informal daily classroom assessment to more formal reporting. The purposes for assessment are: (a) continually informing the teacher's decisions for instruction, (b) systematically assessing the student's strengths and knowledge, (c) determining what the student can do independently and with support, (d) documenting progress for parents and students, (e) summarizing achievement over a period of time, and (f) reporting to administrators and other stakeholders in the community.

Shifts in assessment authority over the second half of this century provide a perspective from which to view the present forms of assessment. In Assessing Critical Literacy: Tools and Techniques, Calfee (1996) summarizes historical trends in

curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The following overview is divided into four time frames: pre-1950, 1950 –1965, 1965–1985, and 1990s.

Prior to 1950 teachers were autonomous. They directed lessons with students' participation relegated to recitation. Curriculum focused on classical academics, and teachers were the professional determiners of how, when, and what to test. Test answers were written in order for students to show their work on a weekly basis, and formal reporting was done at the semester's end. Test results were decided by individual teachers who graded on the curve with scores available immediately from teachers to students and parents.

Between 1950 and 1965, curriculum was driven by behavioral objectives with instructional practices dictated by textbooks in the form of individual recitation and worksheets. External mandates were imposed for when and how to test using textbook end-of-unit tests composed of multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank answers. The purpose of end-of-unit testing was to determine student progress or need for remediation while end-of-year standardized tests were for public accountability. Scoring of these norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests was objective. End-of-unit scores were used by teachers for group decisions and quarter grades.

The next twenty years brought about minor changes in curriculum objectives, which were packaged with textbook directions, individual recitations, and worksheets. These were the times of teacher-proof curriculum packages with external mandates for management by instructional objectives. Students were evaluated using multiple-choice

formats with criterion-referenced, continuous-progress standards. Reporting was done weekly for students, quarterly for parents, and yearly for the general public.

According to Calfee (1996), authenticity has been the focus of the 1990s with teachers taking on the role of facilitator for active, social, and reflective student learning. Teachers as members of a professional community decide when and how to assess for various purposes. Students work on individual and group projects, which are documented in working and showcase portfolios. Teachers evaluate students with other teachers by joint review against locally-established and locally-moderated rubrics in an evaluation process which facilitates continuing dialogue between student and teacher. Formal reporting is done quarterly for parents and yearly for public accountability.

#### Authentic Assessment

Reading and writing, along with speaking and listening, are understood as facets of language learning, and reading itself is increasingly understood as the ability to construct meaning from print (rather than the ability to decode print into sound). A new concept at the turn of this decade, reading as meaning-making necessitated new approaches to assessment (Engel, 1990). Assessment in the broadest sense is the process of gathering and analyzing information relevant to a particular purpose; in the classroom, the most frequently utilized purpose for assessment is in the area of reading (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey, 1997). Therefore, in reading assessment, information about student performance is gathered and analyzed to influence decisions about what type of instruction students should experience. Teachers have specific purposes for assessing students in reading-related areas: (a) to determine overall reading ability; (b) to examine



students' use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues in reading; (c) to analyze students' ability to make meaning from the printed page; (d) to determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas; and (e) to determine students' strengths and needs in becoming more proficient readers inside and outside the classroom.

Assessing students' reading abilities must be done in the context of variables that students bring to the process such as experiential background, prior knowledge, motivation, interests, and varying cultural perspectives (Cheek, Flipppo, & Lindsey, 1997). Thus, literacy assessment is best approached from a sociocultural perspective as a lived experience in the world, understood by social actors (Au & Asam, 1996). Theorist Lev Vygotsky has had the greatest influence on literacy researchers working from a sociocultural perspective (Hiebert, 1991). Vygotsky's holistic approach to learning states that learners need to engage in authentic literacy activities involving the full processes of reading and writing, not activities contrived for practice and presented in isolation.

Accordingly, authenticity is implied in literacy assessment as well as in literacy learning. Vygotsky proposes that functions, such as literacy, involve a movement from performance assisted by capable others to performance controlled by the individual. This is the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is central to Vygotsky's views of the social origins of higher mental functions (Au & Asam, 1996). ZPD is "the distance between what an individual can accomplish during independent problem solving and what can be accomplished with help of an adult or more capable

other member of the culture; the hypothetical, dynamic region where learning and development take place” (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 171).

Vygotsky expressed dissatisfaction with the use of achievement tests to measure students’ capacity to learn. Such tests characterize students’ actual development level retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively (cited in Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 136). In contrast to static assessment procedures that emphasize previously acquired knowledge, dynamic assessment involves purposeful teaching within the testing situation. In attempting to distinguish the student’s apparent level of development from the child’s potential level of development, dynamic assessment measures the performance the child is capable of attaining with support.

Calfee (1996) promotes an assessment framework in which teachers’ assessment practices structure and guide decision-making. First, assessment is a problem-solving process driven by questions and hypotheses which are student-curriculum-driven. Second, assessment is clearly tied to instruction: teachers assess what they teach, which influences what and how they teach. Third, assessment is ongoing; and, finally, assessment must be explicit. Teachers and students must know what they are looking for to know when they have found it.

Appropriate early literacy assessment is aligned with standards and individual student needs. In Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), the editors support assessment as essential for planning and implementing appropriate curriculum. Yet, accurate assessment of young children is

difficult because their development is rapid, uneven, episodic, and embedded within specific cultural and linguistic contexts. In an effort to decrease inaccurate and inappropriate assessment measures which are often used to label, track, or otherwise harm young children, the following guidelines describe developmentally appropriate assessment practices: (a) Assessment is ongoing, strategic, and purposeful. The results of assessment are used to benefit the child—to inform instruction, communicate with the child's family, and evaluate the program's effectiveness for the purpose of improving the program; (b) content of assessment reflects progress toward important learning and developmental goals with a systematic plan for collecting and using assessment information that is integrated with curriculum planning; (c) methods of assessment are appropriate to the age and experiences of young children and include observations of children's development, descriptive data, systematic collections of representative work by children, and documentation of performance during authentic activities. Input from families as well as children's self-evaluation are part of the overall assessment strategy; (d) assessments are tailored to specific purposes and used only for the purposes for which they have been demonstrated to produce reliable and valid information; (e) decisions that have a major impact on children, such as placement and enrollment, are never made on the basis of a single developmental or screening device; (f) identification of children with special learning or developmental needs is made to plan and implement curricula that are appropriate for them; (g) assessment recognizes individual variations in learners and allows for differences in styles and rates of learning, facility with English, stage of language acquisition, and level of proficiency in home language of students for whom

English is the second language; and (h) assessment legitimately addresses what children can do independently along with what they can do with assistance (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Teachers study children as individuals as well as in their relationship to groups by documenting group projects and other collaborative work.

In successful elementary reading programs, teachers have explicit purposes, including curricular goals and student need, for assessing students in reading-related areas. The two types of assessment are formal and informal. Formal assessments consist of readiness tests, screening tests, criterion-referenced achievement tests, and norm-referenced standardized tests. Informal assessments generally include observation, miscue analysis, teacher-made tests and procedures, and analysis of work samples (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). Cheek, Flippo, and Lindsey (1997) list five purposes for assessing students in reading-related areas in Reading for Success in the Elementary Classroom. To demonstrate an alignment between purpose and practice, a graphic representation was designed. Assessment practices which accomplish the purpose of each informal literacy assessment are presented in the form of the Literacy Assessment Guide found in Figure 2.2.

The literacy-rich classroom communicates the importance of actual reading and writing by engaging the child in a variety of print activities in every aspect of the school day. Fountas and Pinnell (1996) suggest that each student should have a literacy folder which serves as a teacher record. Each literacy folder contains the following items: (a) observation survey test forms and summaries of information; (b) running record forms over a period of time, containing complete information as to accuracy, self-correction,

and analysis of cue use; (c) anecdotal records; (d) record of fluency assessment, including audiotape, summary sheets with rubric and child's score; (e) individual book list; and (f) informal writing and spelling assessments.

<b>Literacy Assessment Guide</b>	
<b>Purposes for Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Assessment Practices or Tools</b>
Determine overall reading ability	Informal reading inventory, observation survey, running record, developmental reading assessment, group diagnostic screening, leveled word test, basal assessment tools
Examine use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues	Oral reading, writing samples at various stages, written or oral story retelling, cloze procedure, classifying and contrasting word bank
Analyze ability to make meaning from a printed page	Story retelling, following written directions, readers' theater, writers' workshop, range of reading (genre, level, topics), journals, story frames
Determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas	Comprehension in content-rich thematic units, creative dramatics, writing samples, book-reading graphs, content mapping, journaling
Determine strengths and needs to become more proficient reader inside and outside the classroom	Running record, student self-evaluation and self-reflection, teacher conferences with student, teacher conferences with other teachers, teacher observation, parent participation, anecdotal records, record of fluency assessment

Figure 2.2  
Literacy Assessment Guide

Information in the literacy folder is used to make decisions about grouping, prepare for parent conferences, analyze student strengths, and as a basis for formal reporting. Some of the items in the literacy folder are appropriate for children's literacy portfolios in which working and showcase artifacts are placed.

An educational portfolio is a systematic, purposeful collection of students' work that represents learning in one or more subjects (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997). Valencia

(1990) summarizes four guiding principles of portfolio assessment: (a) Sound assessment is anchored in authenticity; (b) assessment is an ongoing process for chronicling student development; (c) valid reading assessment is multidimensional: Assessing reading abilities across a wide range of texts and for a variety of purposes aids in examining students' habits and attitudes as well as their knowledge and use of metacognitive strategies; and (d) assessment provides for active, collaborative reflection by both teachers and students of what students have learned and what they need to learn.

Comprehensive, appropriate assessment for lower elementary grades is virtually unavailable on the commercial market. Given the sociocultural theoretical framework of early learning which emphasizes cultural and linguist contexts, such a void is understandable. Yet, the challenge still rests with local educators who desire a relevant medium for communicating with stakeholders about learning. Thus, schools and school districts must find ways to report student learning in effective and meaningful ways.

In Communicating Student Learning: 1996 ASCD Yearbook, Guskey (1996) edited articles in which more than forty school/district assessment systems are discussed. Many similarities exist, but each is unique and has obviously been assembled in response to specific needs. The yearbook articles demonstrate an evolutionary cycle of continuous improvement that begins with the need to report about learning. "What stands out most clearly is that the process of developing an effective reporting system is never complete. The better you get at reporting, the better the assessments you use, the better your instruction becomes, the more you need to update your reporting system to reflect the changes in instruction, and on and on" ( Lake & Kafka, 1996, p. 116).

**“Literacy Portfolios in the Early Childhood Classroom” describes an urban school district’s assessment process in progress. Authored by kindergarten teacher Cheryl Polakowski (1993), the article chronicles the district’s response to the frustration regarding assessments available to measure accomplishments of young learners. The main objective of the district was to develop assessments complementary to the instructional program that would be a reflection of the individual learner. Concurrently, the district had a desire to communicate progress to parents and other teachers more efficiently and to build accountability. As a first step, the working committee decided on the types of data they wanted to collect and devised the following list: (a) self-portrait, (b) interviews with children including questions about literacy interests and attitudes, (c) interviews with parents including questions about literacy attitudes, (d) concept about print test to assess children’s strategies for making sense of print, (e) word awareness writing activity, (f) sight word list from storybooks and frequently used texts, (g) reading sample, (h) writing sample, (i) class record showing attendance and other evaluations, (j) story retelling, and (k) optional information.**

**Lower-elementary-school teachers who collected the data for student portfolios were asked to critique the assessment materials by answering two questions. First, were the materials useful? And secondly, were the materials assessing what you teach? This was considered the field-testing phase during which many deletions and additions were made. Two important points were agreed upon: not all components had to be assessed every school year, and it was not necessary to collect the exact same data on every child. The next step was to determine some type of rating scale or scoring rubric. To ensure**

reliability, the committee began working closely with Educational Testing Services (ETS) of Princeton, New Jersey. This collaboration resulted in the K-2 Reading Scale (Polakowski, 1993, p.55) currently used in the district by teachers to determine the “development of children’s strategies for making sense of print” (Polakowski, 1993, p.51). The K-2 Reading Scale has proven to have 95% inter-rater reliability.

In response to the frequently asked question, “How do you manage the use of portfolio assessment in the classroom?” Polakowski stated that she focuses on maintaining a child-centered environment utilizing a management system in which students rotate through each of various learning centers. Four of the five centers are student-directed. In the fifth center, the teacher directs students in “must-do” portfolio assessment activities such as drawing a self-portrait, having an interview, or retelling a story.

The author further stated that child-centered classrooms are conducive to independent thinking, problem-solving, and self-instruction. Children behave positively in a learning environment when they know the classroom belongs to them, and they take on a special ownership for the housekeeping and safekeeping of materials.

The child-centered classroom environment is designed to facilitate natural learning and ongoing assessment within the zone of proximal development. In keeping with Vygotsky’s holistic views of the social origins of higher mental functions (Au & Asam, 1996), dynamic assessment is an integral part of the scaffolding that occurs as the capable other guides the learner to new heights within his or her zone of proximal development. New learning creates a capacity for still newer learning which extends far



beyond the classroom walls. "Literacy learning develops from birth in an ever-expanding, uninterrupted continuum; it is driven by the child's own impulse toward competence and participation in the world's events" (Engel, 1990, p.120).

### **Successful Title I Programming**

As an example of the broad range of possibilities available to eligible districts to meet the academic needs of students, findings from several successful Title I programs follow.

#### **Promising Prospects for Replication**

Are there designs that schools can utilize to enhance learning of students placed at risk of academic failure? If so, what are their key characteristics, and what local conditions and steps are required to replicate those programs? Stringfield, Millsap, and Herman (1997), principal researchers for a three-year longitudinal study of ten effective strategies in twenty-five sites, set out to meet the following goals: (a) describe promising alternatives by collecting in-depth information about the day-to-day operation of a variety of innovative strategies, (b) compare the characteristics of promising alternatives to more traditional practices through the gathering of various process and outcome measures, and (c) assess the replicability of programs that appear most successful for evaluating factors that might facilitate or impede implementation elsewhere.

The ten special strategies ranged from tutors to whole-school reform. They are as follows: (a) James Comer's School Development Program (1988), incorporating collaborative school governance, integrated social services, and parental participation;

(b) Success for All (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1992), requiring intensive school restructuring and an emphasis on improving reading through small group and tutoring sessions, preschool, full-day kindergarten, and addressing difficulties within the regular classroom; (c) Mortimer Adler's (1983) *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto*, emphasizing challenging material, coaching, higher-order thinking skills, and Socratic seminars; (d) Coalition of Essential (CES) Schools, developed by TheodoreSizer (1984), facilitating restructuring of schools by outlining broad directions for local design and implementation using nine CES principles; (e) schoolwide programs virtually eliminating pull-out programs, reducing class size, and increasing staff development; (f) extended year programs, adding school days and more staff development and teacher planning time; (g) Reading Recovery (1985), an intensive first-grade, one-to-one tutoring program developed in New Zealand by Marie Clay in which students spend a half-hour per day with a highly trained reading specialist for up to sixteen weeks facilitating students' reading at grade level and having the necessary reading skills to progress further with no remediation; (h) several commercial vendors offering integrated computer-assisted instruction in which students spend a half-hour each day in interactive, computer-driven instruction; (i) tutoring, utilizing commercially-produced and locally-derived material and delivering a highly structured reading, mathematics, and English as a Second Language tutorial program implemented by cross-age peer tutoring or by paraprofessionals; and (j) after-school and summer programs making available more and varied instructional activities designed for students who are not able to keep up at the rate of their peers.

The eight major findings of the study (Stringfield, et al., 1997) are: (a) Students placed at risk are capable of achieving at levels that meet the national average; (b) each of the programs in the study has special strengths, yet there is great variance in both implementation levels and effects; (c) schools obtaining the greatest academic gains paid close attention to issues of initial and long-term implementation; (d) promising programs that concentrated on early grades obtained larger achievement gains from students placed at risk than did programs spreading resources more evenly over the elementary grades or in secondary schools; (e) series of distressing findings through extensive observations across virtually all classrooms include instruction driven by management issues, uneven access to subjects beyond reading/language arts and math, and reforms stifled by simplistic issues such as scheduling; (f) resources are in short supply; (g) Chapter 1 is the primary engine for reform in otherwise distressed schools; and (h) most programs are continuing to evolve and improve. This mixed-design study was conducted during several years when the federal compensatory education program was known as Chapter 1 (1981–1993), not Title I; therefore, the program is referred to by that name. The subsequent programs described in this literature review are named as referenced in the original articles.

#### Restructured Chapter 1 First Grade

“With a handful of exceptions, literacy researchers have paid little attention to Chapter 1. . . Studies that focus on Chapter 1 practices or students are few” (Hiebert, 1992, p. 546). Given this finding, a study is presented that examines the effects of a restructured first-grade Chapter 1 program developed by a university research team in

collaboration with Chapter 1 teachers. The restructured program differs from regular Chapter 1 in instructional strategies, teacher-pupil ratio, assessment practices, and opportunities for teacher-professional development. The district goals for reading and writing are utilized through the implementation of word patterns and analogy strategies. Instruction consisted of three activities: (a) reading of predictable books, (b) writing rhyming words and journal writing, and (c) strategic guidance about patterns of words. The assessment system for the project consists of two elements: (a) quarterly pre- and post-tests of text and word-level reading and writing, and (b) weekly record of each child's reading of a text which assists the teacher in instruction.

Based on typical instructional tasks, standardized test scores, and pre-/post-test scores, the study examines the percentage of students in the project who became proficient readers and writers, compares student performance in the restructured program with that of district students in the regular Chapter 1 programs, and examines the performance of project students in relation to the performance of their non-Chapter 1 classmates.

Results from the study clearly showed that the restructured program had positive results for project students. "At the end of the year 77% of the students were reading the texts that are designated for the second half of grade one" (Hiebert, 1992, p.560). In comparison, almost all the district children in the regular Chapter 1 programs left first grade with little or no proficiency as readers or writers. As for non-Chapter 1 students, even though project students initially had lower readiness scores, by the end of the school

year project students were performing at the same level as the average students in the class on reading and writing tasks.

Since Title I/Chapter 1 funding had historically been used for pull-out programs—programs in which targeted students receive remedial instruction outside of the regular classroom these findings challenged the frequent assumptions that the time Chapter 1 students spend outside of the regular classroom is detrimental. “When children received instruction that was carefully planned and executed in a pull-out context, they did better than peers who initially performed higher but stayed in the classroom” (Hiebert, 1992, p.565).

#### Teacher Behaviors and Student Gain

Brophy (1988) reviews the research linking teacher behavior to student achievement and considers the implications for instruction of Chapter 1 pull-out models. The author believes that research conducted in the regular classroom setting is relevant to compensatory education because very little research on the relationship between specific instructional practices and student achievement gain has been conducted in Chapter 1 settings. Brophy has four additional reasons for believing that research conducted in regular classroom settings is relevant to compensatory education: (a) Other researchers tout that the amount and nature of instruction that takes place are more important determinants of outcomes than the settings in which they occur; (b) research has produced little evidence indicating a need to modify instruction for students who differ either in aptitude, achievement level, SES, ethnicity, or learning style; and (c) with few exceptions, findings on pull-out programs suggest “the same patterns of relationship exist

between instructional practices and student achievement gain as do the findings from studies conducted in regular classroom settings” (Brophy, 1988, p.236-7).

Proceeding from these assumptions, Brophy reviews the research on teacher effects. Teacher effects research seeks to link measures of teacher behavior with relatively general measures of student achievement. Specific quantitative research findings are reviewed in such areas as opportunity to learn, content covered, role definition/expectations, time allocations, classroom management, student-engaged time, consistent learning time, and active teaching. Brophy also reviewed findings from qualitative research studies focusing on such topics as information giving, structuring, clarity, enthusiasm, student questioning, and many others.

Brophy’s review of the literature linking teacher behavior with student gain and potential implications for Chapter 1 was lengthy but not exhaustive. Yet, the author notes that two common themes emerged from the findings. One is that academic learning time is influenced by the amount of time that students spend engaged in appropriate academic activities. Second, students learn more efficiently “when teachers instruct them actively by structuring new information and helping them relate it to what they already know, and then monitoring their performance and providing corrective feedback” (Brophy, 1988, p. 275). Brophy concluded that the key to increasing the achievement gains of these students (or any student) appears to be maximizing the time they spend being actively instructed by their teachers or supervised as they work on instructional-level-appropriate assignments.

### Successful Schoolwide Programs

In contrast to pull-out programs, some Title I schools choose to serve the entire student body in schoolwide programs. A synthesis of successful schoolwide programs is presented in Implementing Schoolwide Projects: An Idea Book for Educators (Pechman & Fiester, 1994). This compilation of successful programs presents perspectives from “twenty-one highly regarded schoolwide projects under Title I’s predecessor, Chapter 1, to identify the principles guiding effective schoolwides” (Pechman & Fiester, 1996, p. 171). From an original list of seventy possible sites, twenty-one were chosen because their student-achievement data indicated more than two years of success. Findings were based on in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, review of archival data, test score gains over time, student involvement in learning, and parent and community participation.

Schoolwide programs are locally devised and unique; however, the most successful build on a framework that includes the following eight features: (a) shared vision, (b) time and resources for planning and program implementation, (c) skillful management and a well-defined organizational structure, (d) clear focus on academics, (e) continuing professional development, (f) commitment to cultural inclusion, (g) parent and community involvement, and (h) accountability orientation.

“Successful schoolwide programs involve dedicated and inventive educators working hand in hand with people and resources in their local communities. Successes do not come about easily or quickly, but—given the opportunity—schoolwide programs gain strength over time. Through hard work, collaboration, and mutual respect, Title I

schoolwide programs can move communities ever closer to meeting the long-held goals of academic excellence for all children” (Pechman & Fiester, 1996, p.190). Title I provides a comprehensive structure within which school communities work together to participate in planning, celebrate successes, and converge to re-work strategies that are not meeting the needs of their students.

### **Summary**

Successful reading teachers create safe, meaningful environments in which they utilize the most appropriate methods for carrying out informed instruction through on-going assessment. Equally, best practices in reading instruction are vital for producing readers in elementary schools. Teachers must be afforded opportunities to keep abreast of the many techniques that are available to help them meet students’ needs. Along with appropriate instructional strategies, teachers need resources and time to create optimum learning environments in which to implement these plans.

Demanding similar attention is the need for teachers to communicate student learning by inventing and utilizing assessment practices designed to measure reading progress, inform instruction, and communicate with parents and the general public.

Educating children in Title I schools is generally thought to be more challenging than teaching children in non-Title I schools. However, the literature provides little to support this perception. As Brophy (1988) discovered, the key to maximizing achievement gains has to do with how students are actively instructed by their teachers or supervised as they work on instructional-level-appropriate assignments, not necessarily with the students’ designation as Title I or non-Title I.



## **CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

#### **Case Study Approach**

A research design is the logic that links the data to be collected and conclusions to be drawn to the initial research questions of a study (Yin, 1994). The case study strategy, selected for this research project, is but one of several ways of conducting social science research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, histories, and the analysis of archival information. In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” and “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

There are four varieties of case studies: (a) single-case study in which a narrative is used to describe and analyze the data; (b) multiple-case report of several single narratives presented as separate sections and an additional section covering the cross-case analysis and results; (c) multiple- or single-case study, without the traditional narrative, based on questions and answers from the case study database presented in the format of a comprehensive examination rather than the format of a term paper; and (d) multiple-case studies in which the entire report consists of the cross-case analysis in which each section would be devoted to a separate cross-case issue (Yin, 1994).

The multiple-case report facilitated the purpose of this research endeavor, which was to gain understanding of what occurred in schools with similar students who achieved at different levels. Designed to describe and analyze reading instruction in four

Title I elementary schools, this study focused on two successful schools with high achievement scores and two unsuccessful schools with low achievement scores. Each of the four schools served as a single case with a concluding analysis in Chapter Five composed to communicate the cross-school similarities and differences impacting reading instruction in the schools.

The school was established as the unit of analysis for this research study with intense interest in professional personnel having responsibility for the teaching of reading. These teachers were distinguished from those who are not responsible for direct classroom reading instruction. As such, classroom reading teachers were relevant embedded sub-units of analysis within each school.

In addition, Yin (1994) suggests setting geographic and time boundaries to define beginning and end of the case (p.25). To that end, four elementary schools, within a large school district of ninety-nine schools, were chosen, thus defining the geographic boundaries. The time of the study was bound within the 1997–98 school year and subsequent summer, when long-term immersion facilitated the gathering of comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth data about reading instruction in the four participating schools; member checking with teachers at school sites; intermittent peer debriefing; and external auditing.

According to Yin (1994), there are six types of case study evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. Each plays an important part in the gathering of information. For this reason the following principles of case study research were employed during the

course of this inquiry: (a) the use of multiple sources of evidence; (b) creation of a case study database; and (c) maintenance of a chain of evidence by engaging an external party to follow the derivation of evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions.

### Qualitative Methodology

Just as case study research can include both single- and multiple-cases, case study evidence can be collected, analyzed, and reported utilizing solely qualitative methodology, solely quantitative methodology, or a mixed methodology utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods (Yin, 1994). The qualitative method was most appropriate for this study. The settings were naturalistic with the investigator positioned to describe human behaviors and circumstances as they occurred. Data were gathered and analyzed inductively as themes and patterns emerged contributing to holistic understanding of the social situation under study. Utilizing qualitative methodology facilitated the gaining of meaning during this inquiry, which is the primary concern of qualitative researchers, who are interested in process rather than outcome (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

### **Selection of Participants**

As stated in Chapter One of this document, the Relative Performance Indicator (RPI) scores were a major factor in selecting schools for participation in this research study. In addition to the schools' ranking by RPI score, calculated through regression analysis, other factors were considered when making final school selections for participation. District-level input regarding the following issues was weighed: equitable

racial composition of school principals, school inclusion in other studies, past administrative effectiveness, and the principal's willingness to participate in the study.

Researchers contracted by the Read Independent School District calculated the RPI from 1996–97 public records data supplied by the Louisiana State Department of Education. The RPI was not a part of the data reporting system of the State Department of Education; however, Read Independent School District had this information calculated to gain a clearer picture of district school performance.

The RPI for each school was calculated through a regression analysis in which five variables were used to predict a combined score from criterion-referenced-tests (CRT) and norm-referenced-tests (NRT). The variables used in the statistical procedure were: (a) socioeconomic factors, (b) community type, (c) percent special education students, (d) percent language-minority students, and (e) percent gifted students. As a result, each school had a 1996–97 RPI score in addition to their CRT and NRT scores. Positive RPIs indicate that the school exceeded prediction, while negative RPIs indicate that the school fell below prediction. The average RPI was 0.00, with a standard deviation of 1.00. Of the ninety-nine schools in the Read Independent School District, there are thirty-nine Title I elementary schools. RPIs for elementary schools in the district ranged from +1.2797 to -2.1702. Scores below -1.0 were given a rating of low, those from -.999 to -.501 were given a rating of low/medium, and those from -.50 to +.50 were given a rating of medium. Medium/high ratings were designated for +.501 to +.999, and high ratings were given for scores from +1.0 and above. School frequencies by category are shown in Figure 3.1.

<b>1996-97 Relative Performance Indicator Rating for Read Independent School District Title I Elementary Schools</b>				
<b>Low -1.0 and Below</b>	<b>Medium/Low -.999 to -.501</b>	<b>Medium -.5 to +.5</b>	<b>Medium/High +.501 to +.999</b>	<b>High +1.0 and Above</b>
<b>13 schools</b>	<b>6 schools</b>	<b>17 schools</b>	<b>2 schools</b>	<b>1 school</b>

Figure 3.1

**1996-97 Relative Performance Indicator Rating for  
Read Independent School District Title I Elementary Schools**

Given the purpose of this study—to describe reading instruction in differentially successful schools— schools fitting the extreme or deviant purposeful sampling criteria were selected. As suggested by Patton (1990), the purpose of this sampling strategy was “learning from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, such as outstanding success/notable failures. . .” (p.182). After additional consultation with district administrators, the two unsuccessful schools were selected from the low category with the successful schools coming from the high and medium/high categories. Profiles for each of the participating schools are located in the appendix: (see Star One, Appendix B; Star Two, Appendix C; Hope Two, Appendix D; and Hope One, Appendix E.)

### **Ethics**

“Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people—qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involve greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches” (Patton, 1990, p. 356). As such, every effort was made to address issues in a professional and ethical manner while implementing this qualitative study. Ethical issues of concern were informed consent, beneficence, individual rights to

privacy, dignity, and avoidance of harm (The Belmont Report, 1978). The identities of all individuals participating in the study are confidential and are reported through pseudonyms (American Educational Research Association [AERA], 1992). Identities of the participating schools remain anonymous as well.

### **Data Collection**

Qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection: a) in-depth, open-ended interviews, b) direct observation, and c) written documents (Patton , 1990). Utilizing all of these data collection techniques in this inquiry corroborated the findings and served as triangulation of data sources. Therefore, evidence for this research study was collected through prolonged engagement with selected professional staff at each school site using the following: (a) Interviews were conducted one-on-one with principals and classroom teachers of reading; (b) focus groups were facilitated for eight to ten randomly selected teachers at each site; (c) observations were made in each reading class; and (d) written documentation was perused and analyzed. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the timeline and procedures followed for collecting and analyzing data.

### **Initial Procedures**

Foundational to gathering data is gaining access to a welcome environment. Therefore, phone calls, discussions with principals, and visits with district administrators served as preliminary activities for this study. After verbally agreeing upon the schools to be studied, a letter (see Appendix F) was mailed to the district office requesting official approval. A letter of approval from the district was received on January 14, 1998 (see Appendix G). Principals of participating schools were contacted to schedule school

visitations. The Application for Exemption from IRB (Institutional Review Board) Oversight for Studies Conducted in Educational Settings LSU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (see Appendix H) was completed and submitted to the Associate Dean of Education upon district approval to conduct this study.

<b>Data Collection and Analysis Plan</b>		
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Action</b>
<u>Pre-Field Experience</u> Prospectus approval Agency approvals Instrumentation gathering	November 1997–January 1998	Contact participants Secure approval and consent Write prospectus Engage external auditor
<u>Field Experience</u> Star One School Star Two School Hope One School Hope Two School Data immersion, analysis, re-check	February 1-15, 1998 February 16-28, 1998 March 16-28, 1998 March 1-15, 1998 February - May, 1998	Observe: reading instruction Interview: professionals Facilitate: focus group Peruse written documentation Collect and review field notes DRS Protocol Member check, peer debriefing
<u>Data Refinement</u>	April - June 1998	Analyze data continuously Confirm emerging themes
<u>Report Composition</u>	June - September 1998	Compose report Finalize audit

Figure 3.2  
Data Collection and Analysis Plan

### Triangulation of Data Sources

There was triangulation of data sources to foster the reliability of the study. The data sources consisted of teacher interviews, principal interviews, teacher focus groups, reviewing of archival data, and classroom observation scripted field notes. Information from key informants at each site was included. The key informant at Star One and Hope One was the principal, and the teacher for instructional support was the key informant at the other schools.

**Observations.** In each classroom observation, the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) protocol was employed while observing and documenting the dimensions of social behavior: space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal, and feelings (Spradley, 1979, p.79). Multidimensional grand- and mini-tours provided opportunities to make thick descriptions of ample raw data and document quotes from participants. These data facilitated the creation of cultural domain analysis, structural questioning, taxonomic analysis, contrast questioning, and componential analysis.

Tools for this observation protocol included columned 11"x 17" accountant pads for recording occurrences by social dimension and 5"x 8" note cards for documenting domain analyses. Field notes were read and reread to determine and examine emerging themes. Through both focused and selected observations, contrast questioning techniques were incorporated.

In addition to utilizing the DRS protocol, every six minutes a scan of the classroom was made to ascertain the number of students involved in teacher-directed or teacher-planned activities. Selected from the Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness Assistance Pilot Manual (1997), the Revised Classroom Snapshot (see Appendix I) was used to record the number of children engaged in interactive time on task (TOT), non-interactive time on task, and off-task activities.

Another instrument from the Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness and Assistance Program, the Classroom Observation Instrument School Effectiveness and Assistance Program (see Appendix J) was administered as a part of the the observation protocol. Also called the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching



(LCET), the purpose of the instrument was to provide yet another way to examine instructional behaviors occurring within each school. The nineteen attributes listed on the instrument are sectioned by components and further divided into two domains: management and instruction. A four-point rating scale was used with the following designation: 4-demonstrates excellence; 3-area of strength; 2-needs improvement; 1-unsatisfactory. A rating of 2.5 is the midpoint of these scales.

Interviews. Each participating teacher was interviewed with benefit of the interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) which promoted consistency. Question options (Patton, 1990, p.293) provided a framework from which to construct substantive personalized, yet professional, interview questions (see Appendix K). Principals were asked the same interview questions as the teachers.

Focus Groups. The general field of social science research has come to broadly conceptualize the “focus group” technique as a group session of eight to ten persons who have something in common relating to the topic, moderated by a group leader and held in an informal setting with the purpose of collecting information on that designated topic (Carey, 1994). Focus groups provide insight into beliefs and attitudes that underlie behavior. Data regarding perceptions and opinions are enriched through group interaction because individual participation can be enhanced in such a group setting. Also, in one hour the investigator can gather information from eight people instead of only one (Patton, 1990). In selected research settings, the data collected by using a focus group can be more informative and less expensive than the data collected by other methods.

Kreuger (1988) provides a step-by-step process for conducting focus groups. This eight-step system served as a guide to standardize the procedure from one school to the next. Eight to ten teachers were randomly selected at each school and then asked to participate in the focus group sessions. Focus group questions used in this study (see Appendix L ) follow the author's recommendation for conducting group interviews. Focus group comments and responses were recorded as field notes during meetings. Field notes were typed as expanded field notes after each group interaction.

Archival Data. The following are examples of archival and current documents that were requested during school visitations: school improvement plans; unit plans; minutes from school improvement team meetings; library collection and circulation information; inventory lists of equipment, supplies, instructional materials, textbooks, classroom sets of texts, and supplemental reading material; professional library holdings; professional development plans; and school schedules/bell schedules. As field work developed, additional data were solicited and perused as needed.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed for each strategy following the respective protocol. Data were analyzed inductively, starting with raw units that were eventually sorted and classified into more comprehensive categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, for all protocols employed, data analysis was an ongoing activity from entry into the field through member checks and into the final external audit.

### Single Case Analysis

Information gathered for each school was analyzed, synthesized, and reported as an individual case. Each report presented a narrative overview of the school context with a general description of the findings as they evolved during the course of the inquiry. The Developmental Research Sequence (Spradley, 1979) was employed to analyze the evidence gathered during classroom observations and individual interviews. The procedures for this protocol are sequenced from simple to complex in a hierarchy within which data collection and analysis build on and from each other.

Students' time on task (TOT), using the 1997 Revised Classroom Snapshot, was reported as a schoolwide percentage of students' time being spent engaged in learning during reading class. This percentage was derived by averaging individual class TOT scores.

The Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET), which was administered as a part of the observation protocol, was reported as a schoolwide score ranging from 1-4. The four-point rating scale was used as follows: 4-demonstrates excellence; 3-area of strength; 2-needs improvement; 1-unsatisfactory. The nineteen attributes are divided into management and instruction domains which speak to the first research question of this study. Schoolwide scores for the TOT and the LCET are included in each school's case study found in Chapter Four.

Kreuger (1988) recommends the following steps for analyzing focus group data:

(a) Read complete written report to comprehend the trends and response patterns;

(b) examine one question at a time; (c) pay attention to the themes for each particular question; (d) look for frequently occurring words; (e) consider the context; and (f) find the “big ideas.” All analyses should feed back to the purpose of the focus group interview.

### **Multiple Case Analysis**

Inasmuch as the purpose of this study was to compare reading instruction in successful schools with reading instruction in unsuccessful schools, the aspects of the reading classroom were compared across individual cases. Since the conceptual framework of the first school set up the case study structure, subsequent cases were compared to the first to determine the compatibility of the patterns (Yin, 1994) . Themes were documented that cut across cases as well as themes that magnified contrasts between and among cases. The main focus was on determining similarities and differences, not between individual schools but between aspects of reading that are common to successful reading programs and noticeably absent from unsuccessful reading programs.

Students’ Time on Task scores for each school, along with Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching scores, were compared among participating schools. These comparisons can be found in Chapter Five as a part of the componential analysis.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness describes the extent to which an inquirer can persuade audiences that her findings are worthy of attention. Credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability serve as techniques for the investigator to incorporate in the study to establish trustworthiness of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following

procedures were carried out with the hope that the audience will be persuaded that the findings are trustworthy.

### Rigor

Credibility. The interpretations of situations as reported by the investigator must be believable to the participants of the study. In the establishment of credibility, several actions were employed. The study was approached with intent to document and report findings as they occurred through (a) persistent engagement over an uninterrupted period of time, which provided the opportunity for extensive and on-going data collection and analysis, (b) triangulation of data methods, (c) peer debriefing for support in maintaining the integrity of the process, and (d) member checking for verification that investigator interpretations were accurate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1994).

Evidence for the study was gathered at four school sites in Read Independent School District during the spring semester of the 1997–1998 school year. Persistent observations and interviews at the four schools over this period provided the opportunity to gather data for the study from which the themes emerged.

Triangulation was achieved by gathering data using various methods for the dual purposes of getting information from different sources and checking for accuracy. As an additional safeguard, two doctoral candidates agreed to serve as peer debriefers and did so on several occasions. During those sessions, field notes, note cards, and trial theme categories were analyzed and discussed. Teachers and principals were the member checkers. They were sent typed copies of interview responses and given the opportunity to respond to misinterpreted information.

**Transferability.** Generally associated with the concept of transferring conclusions from one study to a separate situation, transferability is most often established in a qualitative study through the use of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). My responsibility was to provide an accurate, rich accounting of the study findings. The reader determines the applicability of the findings to his or her setting.

**Dependability and Confirmability.** Qualitative investigators make use of an external auditor for dependability and confirmability while checking for biases. My external auditor has a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction and is well-versed in both early literacy education and qualitative research.

To what extent would similar outcomes occur, if the same process was repeated? To what extent are the findings logical, unbiased, and grounded in data? In addressing these concerns the external auditor had access to the raw data, working papers, anecdotal notes, rough drafts, and instrumentation information. She was charged with answering the following questions: (a) Are findings grounded in data? (b) Are inferences logical? (c) Is the category structure appropriate? (d) What is the degree of researcher bias? and (e) What strategies were used to insure credibility? (Schwandt and Halpern, 1988).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FOUR CASE STUDIES**

Familiar rereading is a strategy used in an effective, balanced reading program.

Many first grade children do this with great confidence and fluency. When a stellar first grade teacher at Hope Two School repeatedly asked her students during guided reading, “What do good readers do?” they always answered, “Reread.” This strategy is not listed in the qualitative research journals; yet, familiar rereading is an apt descriptor for the many times I have studied the data collected during the course of this inquiry in an attempt to make meaning. Again, just as this wise novice teacher posed questions to her students from the guided reading repertoire, I asked myself, “Does it make sense?”

What began to take shape after numerous readings of my data was the similarity between this work and the goals set in many of the classes in this study. Children discussed the parts of a book each time they opened it. Teachers built on prior knowledge and personal experiences to connect students to the work. This was such a natural occurrence in classrooms that I began doing the same with my information: categorizing data into sections such as context, people, events or activities, problem/solutions, and implications for the future. Thus, the themes for this study began to take form and eventually emerged after many rereads and reclassifications into familiar parts of a story: setting, character development, and plot. These elements are introduced and explained in this chapter.

In Chapter Five, the problem/solution part of the storyline unfolds as taxonomic and componential analyses are presented and discussed. Chapter Six presents an

opportunity to answer questions raised during the course of the study and to conclude by sharing implications for future study in the form of the epilogue.

A short description of each theme is provided in the first part of this chapter to set the stage for the four case studies. The case study of each school is then presented.

### **Themes**

The three main categories of this qualitative study emerged as three themes: setting, character, and plot. *Setting* encompasses the place and time of the social situation under study. Place, as an attribute of school setting, includes a description of bricks and mortar and the general climate of the building's physical environment inclusive of the classroom and the instructional materials within.

In addition to place, time helps to define this theme. At the time of this research study, the official school day for teachers in district elementary schools was 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.. The student school day began at 8:45 a.m. and ended at 3:15 p.m. As a contributor to the time theme, results from the Revised Classroom Snapshot (see Appendix I) present a way to describe the level of student involvement in instructional activity. In each regular classroom during the observation phase, a scan of the classroom was made every six minutes to ascertain the number of students involved in teacher-directed or teacher-planned activities. Selected from the 1997 Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness Assistance Pilot Manual, the instrument was used to record the number of children engaged in interactive time on task (TOT), non-interactive time on task, and off-task activities.



The *character* theme defines people and their relationships within the social situation. Children are central characters who take on the role of student, while adults assume main and supporting roles. Main characters (principals and regular classroom teachers) are described through their actions, feelings, and beliefs; ancillary teachers are cast in supporting roles. Information about years of teaching at the school, degrees earned, and staff development topics gives further insight into the qualifications of the teachers.

*Plot* serves to outline the action and state-of-being of the social situation. The linear plot in the school setting, peopled with the main and central characters, describes the existing state of affairs at the time of the inquiry. Instructional practices and communication help to define the plot. Another instrument from the Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness and Assistance Program, the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (see Appendix J) was administered as a part of the observation protocol. The purpose of the instrument was to provide yet another way to examine instructional behaviors occurring within each school. The following case studies are framed by the themes of setting, character, and plot.

### **Star One School**

#### **Setting**

**Place.** Star One School is located on the outskirts of a small village within the 400- square-mile parish (county). Star One School is accessed by turning left from the main highway and crossing a railroad track. To reach the 32,857-square-foot school, one meanders through a modest neighborhood. The school was built in 1959 on a fifteen-acre

site in a quiet suburban-rural community. The library was built in 1967 and a nine-classroom addition was constructed in 1970. The original facility was air conditioned in 1970. There are twenty-one permanent classrooms on the campus, fifteen of which house the regular classroom teachers who teach reading at the school. There were 550 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade during the year this study was conducted. The upper grades, fourth and fifth, are departmentalized with one teacher at each grade level responsible for teaching reading to all students enrolled at that particular level.

When asked to describe the school in the focus group interview, consensus of the teachers was that there were no discipline problems at the school, mainly due to the administration. The school was further described by the teachers as a place they first chose to teach and a place they choose to continue teaching. Teachers took pride in the fact that they enroll their own children in Star One School. As a general practice, they came early, stayed late, and then returned as needed. As one teacher said, “We work hard to make this a good school. It is our school.”

**Classroom.** As Kritchevsky and Prescott suggest, “Space communicates with people—in a very real sense it tells us how to act and how not to act” (1977, p.9). Three of the fifteen rooms visited during the study were untidy. With the exception of kindergarten and first grade classrooms, Star One classes were organized in a linear, sequential fashion that facilitated attention on the teacher.

One of the first-grade teachers shared that until this school year there were no learning centers except in kindergarten. Even though there were center designations in every classroom at Star One, in ten of the fifteen classrooms individual desks were

isolated in straight rows. The kindergarten wing arrangements, in a departure from the upper level classrooms, connoted a collaborative, holistic environment of a more student-centered orientation than teacher-centered one.

The forty-year-old facility had few visible problems; however, teachers mentioned that the older classrooms made it difficult to utilize equipment requiring electricity due to the limited number and locations of electrical outlets in the classrooms.

**Contents.** Regarding materials at Star One it was clear that the principal procured materials the teachers need. A teacher reported that she was doing a first-grade social studies lesson when the principal was visiting. The teacher acknowledged the principal, who did not stay long, and went on with her lesson. Soon afterwards, the principal returned with a nice new map to replace the worn, outdated one that the teacher had used as a visual aide earlier in her lesson. Figure 4.1.1 gives a listing of instructional materials dictated by literacy events observed at Star One School.

There was a substitute librarian at Star One during my visit. She gave me a report with the following information: there were 7,086 books in the library collection and the average monthly circulation was 1,200 books. At Star One School each class was regularly scheduled for weekly library class to work on appropriately leveled research skills. The principal took responsibility for teaching the classes in the absence of a qualified, certified librarian.

**Time.** At 7:30 a.m. each morning, the principal of Star One did a walk-through visit of the campus. Collaborating teacher meetings began at 7:45 a.m., which allowed

meeting participants to be in their classrooms by 8:20 a.m. Every day students entered the classroom at this time to begin boardwork assigned by the teacher. By 8:45 a.m., the daily routine was underway with formal instruction beginning at 8:50 a.m.

<b>Star One Instructional Materials to Support Literacy</b>	
<b>Literacy Event</b>	<b>Material</b>
To organize the environment and make school life run smoothly	School rules, grammar rules, bus schedules, lunch schedules, clocks, N-S-E-W signs Manuscript/cursive alphabet letters above chalkboard Daily Reading, Math, Social Studies, Science, Geography Centers (15/15) Board work
To facilitate multi-sensory learning activities which include all types of communicative and visual art forms	Puzzles, maps, games Art materials, writing materials Computers (9/15 in use), software, earphones Music, films Interactive bulletin board
To teach specific literacy skill materials	Many books of various genres Basal texts, test-taking booklets Handwriting sheets; penmanship Dyslexia material Goldman Lynch kit Harris-Jacobsen Word Lists Dolch Sight Word List Flash cards, vocabulary cards Weekly Readers Novel units from Sundance
To guide with materials and special spaces that support realistic literacy behavior	Book Center - buddy reading, independent reading School Library (7,086 books) Multiple copies of leveled books Reference books Accelerated Reader Programs Book-it from Pizza Hut

**Figure 4.1.1**  
**Star One Instructional Materials to Support Literacy**

Star One had the fewest classrooms clocks working of the four schools in this study. Ironically, use of time at Star One appeared to be a highly valued resource. School assemblies were few, and only selected grade levels were allowed to participate. One recess was scheduled in conjunction with lunch so children had as little time away

from the classroom as possible. Classroom teachers at each grade level monitored their own students' separate recess.

Upon arrival at school, children ate breakfast and went directly to the classroom where the teacher was involved in her own planning activities. Children immediately began completing assigned review lessons, usually from the board. A predictable signal for formal class to begin was morning announcements by the principal, which were quick and concise.

There was a block of time designated for reading at each grade level with no interruptions. The principal scheduled around grade level reading blocks for students to participate in content ancillary programs, such as physical education, music, resource, guidance, and speech. For activities away from the classroom, ancillary teachers came to the classroom to get the children and then escorted them back. There was no foreign language instruction at Star One School.

Daily, teachers came early and often stayed late. Grade-level meetings and school building level committee meetings were held from 7:45 a.m.– 8:15 a.m. in order for each teacher to be in her classroom for personal morning planning when students arrived. Each teacher was scheduled by the principal to have one planning period per day when her students were involved in a whole-class ancillary program.

Ancillary teachers were scheduled to confer every other week with regular classroom teachers during grade-level meetings. They were also assigned to monitor students before and after school. This allowed regular classroom teachers to plan in their

classrooms and students to complete their review work instead of participating in activities without an academic focus.

On two occasions while I was at the school the administration's respect for classroom time was reinforced. First, a grandparent wanted to make a delivery to a classroom and was politely dissuaded from doing so by the school secretary. Another time, a parent was given permission to observe a reading class but actually tried to hold a conference with the teacher. The teacher courteously declined and suggested that the parent schedule a conference through the office for another time. On both occasions the visitors were treated with respect.

**Time on Task.** For actual classroom time spent with teachers actively engaging students in learning, schoolwide data from the interactive TOT scans showed 62% of the children interactively engaged with the teacher, 32% of the students not interactively engaged with the teacher but engaged in other independent or group instructional activity, and 6% of the students exhibited off-task behaviors.

Even with the apparently successful attempts to use time effectively for instruction, teachers voiced concern about the time constraints placed on them. "I never have time for social studies and science," complained one second-grade teacher. Another teacher said that it was impossible to do everything.

Even though time was scarce, reading was to be taught every day, regardless of interferences in regular scheduling. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) was scheduled from

2:50 – 3:10 p.m. each day. Time for reading was exhibited as well as a stated goal at Star One School.

### Character

Teachers. There were fifteen regular classroom teachers at Star One who taught reading. One of the teachers was substituting for the fifth-grade teacher, who was on leave. The teachers had been teaching at Star One School for an average of fourteen years. Seven of the fifteen teachers had advanced degrees, five with a master's degree and two with a master's plus 30 hours. The teachers were involved in professional development activities offered at the school during monthly district-mandated meetings as well as school-sponsored workshops away from campus. Topics covered included the reading/writing connection, test-taking skill building, computer training, teaching to the new standards, science workshops, and the district-mandated K-3 Initiative.

The principal of Star One school carefully selected her teachers. As an example, the school librarian had just taken a spring semester leave of absence, and the human resources department sent librarian applicants with no elementary teaching experience to interview for the position. The principal decided to utilize a substitute for whom she would prepare, and initially teach, library lessons for the children until she could hire someone qualified. While at Star One School, I conducted many of the teacher interviews in a conference room connected to the library. My experience with the substitute librarian was a positive one. I asked her for library book collection and circulation information for this study, and I received it within two days. Later, I came to

appreciate the relevance of that endeavor when I requested the same information and failed to receive it from another school librarian in the study.

Of the fifteen regular classroom teachers participating in this study at Star One School, there were two who voiced dissatisfaction with the frequent grade-level meetings. All said they were pleased with planning in their classrooms in the morning because of the positive effect it had on the children. In the past, children coming from the playground would bring problems into the classroom that would keep them from concentrating on their work. They were also happy to have one recess scheduled at lunch time with just their grade level. This cut down on lost instruction and concerns for younger and older children being outdoors at the same time.

Teachers said that they were motivated when the principal came into their rooms because she kept them sharp. During a third grade classroom observation, the principal came in, read a student's work, and asked the teacher if the children were supposed to answer in complete sentences. The teacher answered that the children are always supposed to answer in complete sentences, but she had failed to instruct them to do so this time.

When asked about school governance, most teachers said that they were happy to do participate, but some said that they would rather just teach. The teachers said that they were consistent from grade to grade and they knew the skills children should have from one grade level to the next. Several teachers nodded in agreement as one third grade teacher stated confidently, "The principal knows I can handle things." They felt that



they were a positive force in getting things done because they were the decision-makers.

One teacher admitted that because she did not like to teach reading, her personal development plan focused on improvement in that area.

**Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction.** When asked to describe how they think children learn to read, the responses from the professionals fell into the following categories:

	Repetition of words —56.25%
	Experience with language—31.25%
	Phonics —12.50%

Students. Much of the character development for this study is grounded in the focus group responses and interview dialogue. From school to school and participant to participant, the interactions varied from apathetic compliance to emotionally charged monologues. The most revealing of all questions at each site was the answer to the opening focus group question that asked the participants to describe the children who attend the school.

At Star One School, the teachers used descriptive language to communicate a positive profile of a Star One student. As one teacher said, “Many students are on free lunch and come from families where education is stressed because they want their children to get a good education.” Some children have stay-at-home moms from professional families, some live with foster parents, and some children are on medication because of medical problems.

The children at Star One School know what is expected when they enter, and there are few discipline problems. They are self-disciplined; they know what the routine is and they execute it. According to a fourth-grade teacher, children from third grade are coming to the fourth grade stronger and stronger. She said that they love to read and they want to read. Children “not getting it” is unacceptable to the principal. Children love to write to the principal because she makes them feel important. Children also feel important when they have their work displayed in the hall.

Principal. Regular classroom teachers formed the core of the teaching staff, but the principal at Star One was the main teacher. She was in each classroom at least once a day, more often on many days. As described by the teachers, she was a strong curriculum and instructional leader who was responsible for everything at school. She knew what was going on in the classrooms. According to a consensus of the focus group participants, “She has high expectations for everyone at the school—children, teachers, custodial workers, and cafeteria workers.” As a participant observer in early February, I listened during morning announcements as the principal suggested that teachers listen to each child say the word “Valentine” and to correct any mispronunciations. In addition, if they heard a parent mispronounce the word they were to make the correction as well. She closed her morning announcements by saying, “I expect to see teachers and students working hard today.”

The principal put much thought into student placement in classrooms. All children were screened for services as soon as the need was apparent. The principal and

guidance counselor did I.Q. screening, dyslexia screening, and referrals when necessary. All special-needs students were placed in a resource setting or had accommodations before they reached fourth grade.

The principal decided what tasks ancillary teachers performed and prepared their schedules. “She is the queen of scheduling,” said one of the fourth-grade teachers. Another teacher commented, “She expects us to know how to teach reading. Even so, she sent us to a reading/writing workshop in New Orleans to learn more.”

**Ancillary Teachers.** There were few ancillary teachers at Star One. There was no foreign language course offering, hence no foreign language teacher. When the principal arrived six years before, she decided that the children needed to spend their time learning to read English and learn mathematics. One ancillary course was music. I observed a music lesson in a second/third-grade combination class where the music teacher used the lesson to discuss contractions. There was a guidance counselor, librarian, physical education teacher, resource teacher, speech therapist, and Title I ancillary teacher on staff at Star One School. The resource teacher helped the fourth grade teacher who had all the fourth grade 504 students in her homeroom. Ancillary teachers taught whole-class content or they pulled selected students out of the classroom for direct instruction. All ancillary teachers attended grade-level meetings twice a month with the grade level they worked most closely.

The Title I teacher was a non-tenured teacher who worked solely with first grade. A veteran first-grade teacher guided her, and they worked very closely with the other two

first-grade teachers. The teachers spent the first nine weeks of school concentrating on handwriting for all the first graders. One teacher served as the mentor for the others. This was a collaborative effort first suggested by the principal and welcomed by the first-grade teachers.

### Plot

Instructional Practices. Instructional practices emerged as central to the plot theme along with communication and assessment. As an integral part of instruction, the teachers agreed that the discipline program had made the biggest difference in student success at Star One School. Along with the schoolwide discipline program, there were daily practices common to all classes, such as review work on the board in the morning before the bell rang, writing during reading, grouping, nightly homework assignments, Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) every afternoon, children reading aloud to an adult at least once daily, and journal writing.

Another expectation was that each classroom teacher was to present daily activities that incorporated higher order thinking skills. Each grade level followed the sequenced, content-specific handbook. Some activities were used as board work, others were integrated into teacher-directed lessons. As stated by a teacher in the focus group, “The principal purchased these books for us so we could have a varied approach from our regular textbooks.”

For the 1997–98 school year, district officials mandated changes in instructional practices in response to statewide concerns for students leaving third grade without

benefit of reading as a tool for learning. The program, entitled “The K-3 Initiative,” is a districtwide, state-funded early literacy program. All kindergarten through third grade teachers in the district were required to attend intensive training and implement teaching techniques reflecting balanced reading practices.

A change from regular practice, Star One teachers said they understood that the K-3 Initiative strategies were to be employed with each student whose instructional reading level was below chronological grade level. Emphasis on flexible grouping, phonics, and centers were other changes prompted by the K-3 Initiative. Therefore, the teachers cautiously integrated K-3 Initiative strategies while continuing to use basal groupings and methods that had worked for them in the past. Basically, the reading lessons were planned using the old basal series along with the newly adopted reading series. As one of the teachers explained, “I use the new series for listening and literature. The old series is good for skills because it reflects the skills that the children are tested on. The new series does not reach the lower child, many of the stories are too high.” The consensus of the teachers was that the literature selections in the new series were greatly improved from the previous basal, yet the stories were not leveled and extension activities were weak in the skills areas lacking the traditional vocabulary development activities. The teachers also used old familiar stories to reinforce skills.

**Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET).** A part of the data collection process included recording instructional behaviors exhibited by individual teachers using the LCET from the Louisiana State Department of Education School

**Effectiveness Pilot Program.** Individual scores were compiled to reflect one grade level score from which one schoolwide score was determined. A four-point rating scale (1-4) on the LCET allows for indicating unacceptable (1) to outstanding (4) instructional behaviors. A rating of 2.5 is the mid-point.

- An overall schoolwide score of 3.16 on Management, Component A: “The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.0 on Management, Component B: “The teacher maximizes the amount of time available for instruction.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.42 on Management, Component C: “The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.12 on Instruction, Component A: “The teacher delivers instruction effectively.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.01 on Instruction, Component B: “The teacher presents appropriate content.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.67 on Instruction, Component C: “The teacher provides opportunities for student involvement in the learning process.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.95 on Instruction, Component D: “The teacher assesses pupil progress.”

Overall schoolwide ratings on all components on the LCET for Star One were above midpoint.

**Classroom Grouping Strategies.** Before the K-3 Initiative was implemented, there were no centers except in kindergarten; and kindergarten teachers said they liked to do whole-class activities. Each classroom had centers during the research year which would be considered traditional learning centers: reading, computer, listening, writing, art, and math. Star One School centers were places children went to do pre-assigned activities. The only element of student choice was which activity to complete first; allowing students to decide which activity to perform was not included as a part of the center experience. In each center there were ample tasks for students to complete within the allotted time. At Star One School there was little choice in centers, and there was even less inappropriate behavior.

A second-grade teacher used an innovative system for assigning students to centers. Each child was given a ticket in the shape of a seasonal character with the center designation written on it. The tickets were given out as students did their morning review work. Center activities were familiar to the students because they had a mini-lesson at the beginning of the week. There were few distractions as students moved from their seats to a center or to the teacher-directed reading lesson. At no time were there to be more than two students at each center.

The kindergarten, first- and second-grade students were grouped for reading by instructional reading level. The second/third grade combination teacher grouped her students by grade level.

Third-grade teachers worked very closely. The teachers said they “teach to the middle” using basal instruction for the whole class and forming skills groups as student need dictated. They grouped on three days, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Monday they did vocabulary development and on Friday they tested.

Upper grades at Star One were departmentalized. The fourth-grade teacher used novels for whole-class instruction, and she pulled students for instruction in skill areas. Study guides were part of the upper-level instructional program. The fourth-grade reading teacher has all special-needs fourth-grade students in her homeroom. She was responsible for assisting with accommodations and modifications for these students who have been deemed eligible under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Toward the end of the school year, fourth- and fifth-grade teachers were afforded the opportunity to participate in training related to the K-3 Initiative, presumably in an attempt by the school district to promote continuity across grade levels.

Communication. There were clearly stated expectations at Star One School. Every adult and child on the campus was monitored and given feedback regularly. Parents receive communication from kindergarten and first-grade teachers each day. The principal listens and responds to concerns by teachers and parents. The teachers at Star One voiced support of the principal and expressed comfort in speaking to the principal with the confidence that she would make adjustments if the recommendations would have a positive affect on the students.



Central, main, and supporting characters at Star One School exhibited behaviors indicative of informed role expectations—from the janitor to the substitute librarian to the kindergarten student. On a schoolwide basis, teachers planned lessons together, shared ideas and materials from workshops, and were open to new ideas.

Teachers stated that at monthly staff development half-day meetings, they discussed assessment by going over test scores. They used this opportunity to try to communicate across grade level even though that was not the intended purpose of the meeting. Teachers didn't meet across grade level as they would like, commenting that they did the best they could to meet with the teachers on their own grade level.

**Assessment.** How are reading assessment measures and practices used to inform instruction? Student assessment was approached from a global perspective in this learning community. The principal took time and care in placing each student when he or she began the school year, and reevaluated students from year to year. She and the guidance counselor used achievement data, anecdotal records, parent perspective, and screening results from I.Q., dyslexia, and any other special informing mechanism that may be needed.

As the initial assessor, the guidance counselor continued to play an important part in ongoing assessment. By overseeing placement and progress of volunteer tutors, she used assessment to inform instruction in support of the teachers. As soon as problems surfaced, the guidance counselor screened students. By the fourth grade, all special-needs

children receive services from the resource teacher, or the classroom teacher made accommodations and modifications in lessons.

When asked in the interviews about the purpose of assessment, the teachers gave the following answers: to see where we are weak and to check our own effectiveness; we test every Friday; the report card drives what teachers teach and test; to see where the students are and to see where they need to go; and formal assessment is for reporting. In addition to the aforementioned statements, they listed the following assessment measures and practices which I organized in Table 4.2 by assessment purpose.

<b>Star One Literacy Assessment Guide</b>	
<b>Purposes for Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Assessment Practices or Tools</b>
Determine overall reading ability	Informal reading inventory, oral reading test, graded word lists, running records
Examine use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues	Paper/pencil skills check, writing samples
Analyze ability to make meaning from a printed page	Use of body motions (thumbs up/down; brain/book), observation survey, following written directions
Determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas	Art-drawing and development, classroom discussion, independent comprehension check, independently following written and oral directions
Determine strengths and needs to become more proficient reader	Running record, teacher observation, anecdotal records, record of fluency assessment

Figure 4.2  
Star One Literacy Assessment Practices

**Goals.** School goals and instructional goals were important guides to the inquiry into reading instruction. During my interview with a veteran second-grade teacher, she rattled off the school improvement goals and gave background on each. They were centered in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing, computer technology, parental involvement, and cultural diversity. “Children are here to learn, not to be disciplined,”

was a statement she made that was communicated often and in many ways. There was the expectation of continuous progress, student rewards, Book-it from Pizza Hut, and school-level goal of two books per week.

Handwriting, along with creative writing, was a school goal. In a more global sense, the mentor first-grade teacher stated the goal for first-grade students, "Every day to touch on every skill we have learned."

The principal shared that next school year she will expect each teacher to utilize individual student showcase portfolios with writing samples, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), running records, and formal and informal test results. A teacher voiced her confidence in the level of communication at the school when she said, "Teachers know what they are working on, and so does the principal."

**Mandates.** Professional staff discussed many issues that were deemed non-negotiable because they emanated from a higher authority than the school principal. Ideally, setting clear curricula in a comprehensive manner should be the role of the district. Instead, several teachers said, piecemeal policies were made and teachers were bound to carry them out. Examples of such directives include the K-3 Initiative with running records, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), observation survey, and limited instruction about writing; Pupil Progression Plan which dictates no retentions in lower grades and that all children shall read from the same basal; new report card; and LEAP for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the state accountability plan for K-12 public schools.

**Needs.** When asked what three actions would help to make reading instruction more effective, teachers gave the following responses. Seven teachers wanted a lower pupil/teacher ratio, five wanted more leveled books and Caldecott and Newbury award books. Four teachers said they needed updated technology and increased staff development. Three wanted more incentives for children who meet reading goals. Two wanted stronger phonics programs. Other requests included time to teach reading twice daily, districtwide curriculum, more time for teaching, and parent workshops.

### **Star Two School**

#### **Setting**

**Place.** Located between the Mississippi River and a main road in the northern part of the parish, Star Two School can only be accessed on land by crossing a railroad track that parallels the main thoroughfare. The school is 35,088 square feet and was built in 1973 on a 8,010 acre site in a peripheral university community. The school is within a block from the feeder middle school and within a mile of the most famous African American university in the South. There are twenty-one permanent classrooms on this campus which housed 330 kindergarten through fifth-grade students during the year this research was conducted. Students attending this school have the benefit of a departmentalized fourth and fifth grade. This allowed one teacher to concentrate on language arts and social studies while the other taught science and mathematics. In the fourth grade, however, both teachers taught reading while maintaining departmentalization in the other areas.

In describing their school during the focus group interview, the teachers were quick to say that the school, although the victim of a bad reputation, making progress and “really growing.” The present principal, the second in the history of the school, was in her fourth year at the helm. The teachers credited the principal as a supportive administrator who worked hard at uniting the faculty. The school was further described as being well run. Teachers planned together and, under the leadership of the principal, organized their school day to begin with individual planning in their classrooms before children were welcomed at 8:15 a.m. each day. Regular classroom teachers at this school decided how ancillary personnel were to be utilized. Each grade level had some type of professional support to assist with the delivery of reading instruction.

The main concern voiced by some of the teachers was that the gap between third and fourth grade caused difficulty in keeping students on track with curriculum expectations. Several stated that there was little continuity from grade to grade regarding skills addressed, unit topics taught, and field trips taken.

**Classroom.** Setting includes the physical classroom environment, specifically furniture arrangement and general classroom appearance. Of the fifteen classroom teachers of reading, nine of them arranged student desks in a round, flowing orientation. Desks in the other classes were arranged in a more linear fashion. The general appearance of the classrooms was neat except in the case of three classrooms which were noticeably untidy. There were centers in all but two of the classrooms and computers in all except one; however, the computers were on and being used by students in only two of

the fifteen classrooms. Physical environment in these fifteen classrooms suggested that the overall mode of operation in five of them was traditional, with eight giving a more open, student-centered feeling.

**Contents.** Each grade level received an allotment of \$1,000 to supplement classroom resources. In addition, the principal encouraged teachers to request funding for special items by writing a simple grant request to her. There appeared to be an adequate supply of instructional resources available for the teachers to teach reading. Yet, a teacher who teaches in the school's Title I extended day program commented that the school provided ample supplies for the after-school program whereas, for regular classroom activities, teachers are not afforded such easy access.

The library at Star Two School served as the major component of the instructional program. When asked about their reading programs, all of the teachers included the librarian in the description. The librarian assisted the principal with equipment property control and timely dissemination of newly purchased instructional materials. There were 9,217 books in the library collection and the average monthly circulation was 1,200 books. The librarian maintained a small section of the colorfully decorated library for professional material. Each class was scheduled weekly for library class to work on appropriately leveled research skills, and individual students were allowed to visit the library as needed.

The principal of Star Two School gave a graphic description of the deplorable state the textbooks were in when she arrived four years previously. She was pleased that

they were making progress in that area. Regarding instructional materials, the teachers had a wide variety of multi-sensory material. They were quick to show appreciation for the support; yet, they reminded me that the lack of basic supplies, especially pencils, were deterrents to their complete programs. Figure 4.1.2 provides a listing of materials used in Star Two reading instruction.

Time. Instructional time, with meaningful assistance from the ancillary personnel, was mentioned as problematic by some of the teachers. There were two kinds of ancillary teachers at Star Two School: the ancillary teacher who directly supported classroom teacher-planned reading instruction and the ancillary teacher who was responsible for direct instruction in another area, such as physical education or guidance. For example, on certain days the scheduled time for physical education or guidance conflicted with the reading ancillary teacher. One of the teachers described the ancillary schedule as “disjointed.” At this school the cafeteria was designated as a Quiet Zone, and in observance, the students ate breakfast and lunch with little or no talking. At noon one of the ancillary teachers was responsible for rolling the candy cart from classroom to classroom for children to purchase candy. The proceeds from the candy were used to defray the cost of instructional materials. Recess at Star One was from 12:25 p.m. until 12:40 p.m. for lower grades and 12:45 p.m. until 1:00 for upper grades. Some of the children at Star Two School had benefit of additional music instruction with an itinerant strings teacher. Students in fourth and fifth grade have Spanish instruction daily.

Teachers had two planned occasions for grade-level meetings during the course of the school day: an hour per week and one half-day per month. While one teacher did not feel her grade level was “together,” several other teachers stated that, in addition to planned meetings at school, they talked often on the phone about their class activities.

**Time on Task (TOT).** For actual classroom time spent with teachers actively engaging students in learning, schoolwide data from the interactive TOT scans showed 60.20% of the children interactively engaged with the teacher; 28.56% of the students not interactively engaged with the teacher but engaged in other independent or group instructional activity; and 11.24% of the students exhibiting off-task behaviors.

Kindergarten and first-grade students were off-task more often than other students during the scans at Star Two School. During kindergarten and first-grade class visits, it was evident that children were idle too much of the time. The center activities were too shallow. Either the children finished too quickly because they were not challenged and were unclear on what they were expected to do next; or the task was too difficult to be done without benefit of adult assistance.

Many of the teachers stated that they had many interruptions, from the intercom to parents making unannounced visits to the classroom. As far as the announcements, an agreement was reached to put things in memo form for teachers to read outside of class time. Other issues with time included: one teacher complained that she ran out of time so she could not teach science; another said that there was need for more time to help students practice for the norm-referenced testing scheduled for early April.



<b>Star Two Instructional Materials to Support Literacy</b>	
<b>Literacy Event</b>	<b>Material</b>
To organize the environment and make school life run smoothly	Grammar rules Clocks, N-S-E-W signs Manuscript/cursive alphabet letters above chalkboard Centers ( in 13/15 classrooms) Chart stands Boardwork Sharpened pencils
To facilitate multi-sensory learning activities, which include all types of communicative and visual art forms	Puzzles, maps, games, Art materials, writing materials Computers (in use in 2/15 classrooms) Music, films Plays, poetry Taped stories Student-made books
To teach specific literacy skill materials	Many books of varied genres Basal texts, test-taking booklets Handwriting sheets; penmanship Words everywhere Word wall by digraph Phone books Harris-Jacobsen Word Lists Ohio Word List Flash cards, vocabulary cards National Geographics Novel units from Sundance
To guide with materials and special spaces that support realistic literacy behavior	Book Center - buddy reading, independent reading School Library (9,217 books) Multiple copies of leveled books Reference books on carts Pass to the school library Word list taped to desk

**Figure 4.1.2**  
**Star Two Instructional Materials to Support Literacy**

### Character

Teachers. There were fifteen regular classroom teachers at Star Two who taught reading. There were two substitute teachers; one was a retired teacher substituting for a teacher on sabbatical leave and the other had temporary certification which expired at the end of the school year.

The teachers at Star Two tended to use all of the ten allotted sick days. I mentioned to a teacher that I had come to observe her class on the previous day, and there was a substitute in her place. When I inquired about her health, she responded that she had not been ill; the day in question been her birthday, and she does not work on her birthday.

The teachers had been teaching at Star Two School for an average of 5.3 years with an average of twelve years total experience. Five of the fifteen teachers had advanced degrees, three with a master's degree and two with master's plus 30 hours. The teachers were involved in professional development activities offered at the school during monthly district-mandated meetings as well as school-sponsored workshops away from campus. Topics covered included the reading/writing connection, developing test-taking skills, computer training, the new curriculum standards, science workshops, math workshops, National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics national conference, and the district-mandated K-3 Initiative. Several of the teachers went to the International Reading Association International Convention in May of that school year.

There was a feeling of warmth and camaraderie among the Star Two teachers. Their demeanor reflected a sense of community. It appeared that laboring for four years with a new administration had begun to bear fruit. Young and old, Black and White, veteran and novice, there prevailed a unified sense of purpose and accomplishment; yet, they were quick to say that much remained to be done. Assessment was one area needing improvement. They shared ideas at faculty meetings and gave parent workshops.

They said that they were willing to do whatever was beneficial to the school. Most of them appreciated being a part of the governance structure, while several were concerned about the top-down flow of authority from the district office.

**Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction.** When asked to describe how they think children learn to read, the responses from the professionals fell into the following categories: Repetition of words —6.25%

Experience with language—50%

Phonics —31.25%

Depends on the individual—12.50%

Students. Central to the character theme was the role children played as students in Star Two School. When asked to describe the children who attend their school, teachers described their students in two ways, being well disciplined or poorly disciplined. They agreed that the students lacked experiences. One second-grade teacher reported that several of her students had never been to a mall. Teachers reasoned that economic disadvantage was the main cause of the problem; yet many of the children were generally good-natured and church-oriented. The teachers reported that most of the students were an extra year behind academically, but that they were smart children who could learn things for a test. Even with their limited vocabularies and low achievement levels, they enjoyed coming to school and did not miss often. The principal mentioned that some of the children are crack babies.

**Principal.** The principal greeted the children by name when they arrived at school in the morning. She and the ancillary teachers assumed morning duty responsibilities so that teachers could go to their classroom for morning planning. According to the teachers, the principal was in the classrooms, where she talked with the students about their interests, needs, and progress a minimum of three times per week

Of herself, the principal said that she, “loves to see teachers teach and children learn.” She mentioned that she takes pleasure in seeing the interaction between regular and ancillary teachers and that she was trying to create continuity for her school. Her professional growth plan included a literacy model goal for the whole school. She said that she monitored closely and observed often, giving teachers recommendations for improvement. She liked to do a daily check on the students by walking through their environment. “You can tell a lot by what is on the board,” was a comment she made, her smile vanishing as quickly as it had appeared.

She was described as a fair, no-nonsense policy-follower whose door was always open. The teachers agreed that she had a good sense of humor. Teachers knew what she expected and they valued her strength as a good writer and staff developer. She worked very long hours.

**Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS).** For several days while I was immersed at Star Two School, the principal was away due to an illness for which she was hospitalized. Except for one incident with a parent, it was not obvious that she was away

from the campus. The school ran smoothly for many reasons, but the most apparent was the strong presence of the Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS).

The TIS was a resource that Star Two acquired as a part of the revised desegregation court order. The TIS did demonstration lessons, retrieved old books from the depository, made copies, checked boardwork every morning, kept teachers on track for professional leave, coordinated the town meeting while the principal was out, and attempted to solve personality conflicts. Teachers agreed that she helped them “from outside the classroom,” that she was more visible than the principal, somewhat like an assistant principal. The rapport was evident when the teachers agreed at the focus group interview that the TIS, like the principal, had a good sense of humor and “will get us whatever we need.”

**Ancillary Teachers.** There were several types of ancillary support at Star Two School: a) Students instructed as a whole class by a certified teacher in areas such as physical education, Spanish, music, guidance, and library; b) students instructed by a certified teacher in small groups away from the classroom in areas such as special education resource, strings music, and speech therapy; c) students supported by a schoolwide effort by the parent liaison and the TIS; and d) students instructed in small groups within the self-contained classroom by certified teachers of academic readiness in kindergarten and language development in first grade and Title I-funded reading and mathematics in second through fifth grades. Star Two also boasted “grandmothers” who were a part of a special program who came from Monday through Thursday to work with

kindergarten and first grades, Mid-City helpers for lower-grade teachers, and parent volunteers.

Additionally, two of the professional staff were part-time administrative interns who were assigned to shadow the principal as part of a central office administrative training program.

During my time at Star Two, I saw little evidence of the inclusion model which school personnel had described to me. When I observed the language development teacher in a first-grade classroom, she monitored students but left the classroom twice to find teaching tools requested by the teacher. I saw no direct teaching. The other situations were similar with the teacher observing the lesson then assisting individual students with independent activities.

Apparently, the ancillary teachers decided on content and scheduling issues. One novice first-grade teacher commented that her helping teacher needs a break, “so she doesn’t come on Friday.” Having Fridays away from the students seemed to be a common practice among ancillary teachers at Star Two School.

### Plot

Instructional Practices. Each day the students went directly to the classroom where they reviewed work instead of participating in activities without an academic focus. When the bell rang and Classes began, morning announcements soon followed. The day ended with Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Each grade at Star Two was

different, yet within some grades there were dramatic variances, in spite of all the grade-level planning that was done during the school day.

I observed the biggest grade-level difference among the three kindergarten classes. The first class I encountered was likened to the kindergarten classes of old, with children approaching the letter of the week and playing in centers. The next class was quite rigid, with children listening to a whole-class lecture, and being chided by the teacher “You are making me angry” in response to the students’ fidgety movements. The classroom was very neat, but uncharacteristically, the calendar date was not current. The third kindergarten teacher lost control of the class almost as soon as the lesson began. She took the children outside for an energy release, but the situation continued to deteriorate. The noisy children interfered with the schoolwide standardized testing, one of the upper-level teachers told the kindergarten teacher. Having rescheduled my observation due to this teacher’s absence earlier in the study, I had been looking forward to the textbook-quality reading lesson that she had described in our interview. As I quickly learned, oral presentation, not performance, was her obvious forte. As unimpressive as this classroom observation had been, there was one redeeming occurrence. At the beginning of the class, as the teacher discussed parts of a particular book and praised the students’ contributions, one child asked, “What about the dedication page? You didn’t say a name for the dedication.”

The first-grade classes were still operating in a traditional basal teaching mode as were the third-grade classes. Implicit in their actions, these teachers were not yet ready to

adopt the district-mandated K-3 Initiative strategies. The fourth-grade teachers taught using the traditional whole-class basal reading activities as prescribed in the teacher's manual.

The highlight of this school's case study was the fifth-grade reading class. The teacher had a professional manner that was warm and serene, and the oldest children in the school responded in kind. The children were grouped by instructional reading level, and the teacher employed strategies of a balanced reading program. She also incorporated the computer into her lessons.

Just as exciting, but not as polished, were the second-grade teachers. They spoke of the K-3 Initiative as a most wonderful re-creation of good teaching, and their lessons reflected their words. However, I did note that one teacher's writers' workshop did not incorporate the computer for publishing. Only one of the second-grade teachers used the computer as part of the lesson.

The parent liaison for Star Two School used the computers in the computer lab to teach basic skills to the parents. This service was offered to all the parents as an incentive to assist them in completing high school.

**Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET).** Star Two was rated on overall school effectiveness in instructional behaviors during the course of the study to obtain a different perspective of classroom management and instruction. Individual scores were compiled to reflect one grade-level score from which the schoolwide score was determined. A four-point scale on the LCET allows for indicating unacceptable (1) to



outstanding (4) instructional behaviors. A rating of 2.5 is the mid-point. The schoolwide ratings on all components were above mid-point. Schoolwide component scores follow:

- An overall schoolwide score of 3.20 on Management, Component A: “The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.97 on Management, Component B: “The teacher maximizes the amount of time available for instruction.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.19 on Management, Component C: “The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.89 on Instruction, Component A: “The teacher delivers instruction effectively.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.90 on Instruction, Component B: “The teacher presents appropriate content.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.58 on Instruction, Component C: “The teacher provides opportunities for students to be involved in the learning process.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.69 on Instruction, Component D: “The teacher assesses pupil progress.”

**Classroom Grouping Strategies.** Centers at Star Two were designated and utilized in all but two classrooms in a relatively open, unstructured fashion. The centers were rich with inviting multi-sensory learning materials. Several of the centers around the school were reading enjoyment, test-taking, writing center, computer, social studies, poetry, listening, dictionary, stamp, math, word play, library area, literacy, publishing,

music, and sand. Centers were more than a place at Star Two. Children were involved in performing plays, using pantomime, and connecting music with art.

In six of fifteen classes I observed that students were “buddied.” It was interesting to watch a second-grade teacher observe pairs and decide which students needed to be teamed differently. Her manner was quiet and diligent. The children interacted amongst themselves much in the way she interacted with them.

Communication. Expectations were more implicitly than explicitly communicated at this school. Teachers communicated during the school day at hourly grade-level meetings which were held weekly and for a longer period of time on a monthly basis. The teachers shared from other professional development exercises with their colleagues and parents. The teachers appeared happy to work together. They said they had rapport.

Assessment. One of the teachers stated that assessment was one of the hardest things for her during this school year. A second-grade teacher said that she used to assess students for grades, the principal, and parents; now it was more authentic and reflective, so she was clear in analyzing mistakes and planning lessons. Using assessment as a motivator, one teacher said, “I use assessment to increase self-esteem. Some of my children have been told for so long that they are dumb.” The consensus was that assessment was a way to restructure and create new avenues for instruction. One teacher succinctly put it, “It is reflection for me, reflection for my students.” Assessment on a more comprehensive level was the modified concept of looping. For a child in her third-

grade class last year, a teacher requested that he remain with her to repeat that grade. She knew the student's strengths and how to build from them.

One Friday I decided to observe a first-grade testing situation. The teacher spaced the children as far from each other as possible, moving desks to the farthest corners of the classroom facing the walls. She began putting words on the chalkboard, words that many of the children could not see. She handed each child a worksheet with several different exercises on the front and back of the paper. She moved to the chalkboard and gave directions for all of the test sections, one test section being totally unrelated to the next. Assuming that Friday testing is the culmination of a week's work on a particular skill, it was not clear which of the many skills needed to complete the tasks were the objective of study for the week. The children became unruly. The teacher's voice became louder and louder. She quickly gained her composure when the TIS came in to observe the lesson.

When asked what assessment measures and practices they use, Star Two teachers stated the following practices which are listed in Figure 4.2.2.

**Goals.** One of the main school goals was reading improvement, which can only be implemented at the school level. The school improvement plan of Star Two School included goals for improving achievement scores, discipline, parent involvement, and additional instructional materials. The reading goal stated that by the year 2002, 80% of the children who have been at the school the entire time will be reading on level. Children were involved in the Book-it Program with Pizza Hut, a reading-incentive program, and they had the Accelerated Reader Program, a motivational program

promoting comprehension and avid readers. When asked about school goals, the teachers agreed with the novice teacher who said, “Lots more to be done, but together we can do it.”

Star Two Assessment Guide	
Purposes for Assessment	Possible Assessment Practices or Tools
Determine overall reading ability	Informal reading inventories, basal tests, word lists, observation survey
Examine use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues	Writing products, multiple choice, fill in the blanks
Analyze ability to make meaning from a printed page	Oral reading with expression, story map, Venn Diagram, self-evaluation, homework check
Determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas	Paper/pencil tests, journal writing, discussion, pre/post testing, screening tests, daily practice
Determine strengths and needs to become a more proficient reader	Running record, portfolio with a checklist, modified looping, observation survey

Figure 4.2.2  
Star Two Assessment Guide

**Mandates.** The teachers voiced opinions about district-level mandates. They said that the directives did not appear to be a part of a consistent plan. They said they wanted a district-level curricula that would foster consistency.

**Needs.** When asked to enumerate what three actions that would help to make reading instruction more effective, ten teachers wanted a lower pupil/teacher ratio; ten wanted additional and more current materials, especially trade books; three wanted increased staff development opportunities; two wanted reduced paper work; and two wanted the opportunity for greater involvement in decision making.

## **Hope Two School**

### **Setting**

**Place.** Hope Two School is 30,760 square feet and was built in 1955 on a eight-acre site in an inner-city community. Renovations were made in 1965, and a library and ten classrooms were added in 1972. The original facility was air conditioned in 1972. There were twenty-one permanent classrooms on this campus during the research year. When the information was gathered for this study there were 425 students enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade. Thirteen classroom teachers who taught reading participated in this study.

When asked to describe their school, one of the teachers said, “just because the population has changed doesn’t mean that we have to be ‘not so good.’ We make it a good school.” The teacher who had been teaching at the school the longest said that she had watched it change over the years. She said, “When I got here in 1979, I couldn’t breathe because I was so lucky. . .even before the gifted program. It has changed several times.” Another teacher explained that due to the revised desegregation court order they were anticipating a 95% population change between the 1995–96 and 1996–97 school years. “I didn’t know how it was going to feel—I guess we knew we just didn’t have the preparation.” Another teacher lamented that she “doesn’t think the community feels good about us.” She went on to mention comments made by friends and family about their school being named publicly as one of the poorest-achieving schools in the district.

In the focus group interview, one teacher said, “We have had low kids before, but they were not as angry.” The group began discussing the woes of society and changes in values. This led to the consensus that school is a reflection of society. One of the teachers who was visibly distraught reflected the hopelessness of the group.

Crack babies are here, not just crack but alcohol syndrome. Parents are so young. Who is raising these children? They are raising themselves. They are exposed to so much, when you do talk about nouns, you hear words like pimp; when you ask for a word beginning with “O” you get the word overdose.

Trying to change the tone of the focus group, the apparent teacher leader suggested that teachers in their situation are likened to a trauma center. “We should be as highly esteemed as emergency room doctors. That is the nature of our work.”

**Classroom.** The physical arrangement of each classroom at Hope Two was a statement about the teacher who created it. Furniture in ten of the thirteen participating classrooms was placed to promote open, student-centered behaviors. The desks or tables were in clusters with children facing each other. Three of the classrooms were set up in a linear fashion connoting a more rigid environment. Nine of the thirteen classes had learning centers. The teachers involved in the K-3 Initiative made the distinction between learning centers and literacy centers. A learning center integrates reading and writing activities into curriculum areas, while a literacy center is strictly reading and writing. Student work was displayed in all but one classroom. Two of the classrooms were untidy in appearance.

**Contents.** The school mission statement could be found posted in each classroom. One teacher played soft background music during reading. Environmental

print was everywhere. Books, current novels, multiple copies of leveled books, and basal texts were contained in the classrooms of Hope Two School. Figure 4.1.3 gives a sampling of materials to support literacy instruction.

<b>Hope Two Instructional Materials to Support Literacy</b>	
<b>Literacy Event</b>	<b>Material</b>
To organize the environment and make school life run smoothly	School Mission displayed (13/13) Library protocol Manuscript/cursive alphabet letters above chalkboard Centers (9/13 classrooms), center signs, place mats Skittles as rewards in guided reading Environmental print Mechanical pencils
To facilitate multi-sensory learning activities which include all types of communicative and visual art forms	Puzzles, maps, games, Art materials, writing materials Computers (9/13 in use) Music, films Plays, poetry Taped stories Student-made books Overhead Flowers: camellias, azaleas
To teach specific literacy skill materials	Many books of varied genres Basal texts, test-taking booklets Wiggle Works Computer Lab Words everywhere Word wall by digraph Phone books Harris-Jacobsen Word Lists Ohio Word List Flash cards, vocabulary cards Literacy Centers Novel units from Sundance
To guide with materials and special spaces that support realistic literacy behavior	Reading Center - buddy reading, independent reading, reading log School Library (4,639 books) Multiple copies of leveled books Reference books on carts Television/VCR in library On campus grounds

**Figure 4.1.3**  
**Hope Two Instructional Materials to Support Literacy**

Over the past several years, the Hope Two library had become the hub of the school. The librarian planned collaboratively with teachers to create thematic units,

facilitated their implementation, and promoted flexible scheduling allowing students to utilize the library as a complement to their class work. This was called Library Power, the districtwide initiative that preceded the K-3 Initiative. Library Power, in the political sense, had been the highlight of the previous superintendent's administration. Hope Two had been the showcase school for Library Power.

As the superintendency changed in the mid 1990's, so did the instructional focus change from thematic units, integrated curriculum, literature-based instruction to searching for a research-based mechanism designed to produce readers by the third grade. During the search, Library Power limped along; and with the advent of the K-3 Initiative, the program was totally ignored. As one teacher sarcastically put it, "It is as though Library Power died and wasn't given a proper burial." This shift in theoretical orientation to the teaching of reading, along with the change in student demographics, did nothing to help the morale of the teachers at Hope Two School.

Several of the teachers complained because they didn't have a regular library period. They said that if they want a lesson, they have to schedule it with the librarian. However, the librarian received children during the course of each day due to many of the teachers using the school library as one of their centers.

Interviews for this study were conducted in a conference room connected to the library. There were books still in boxes from the vendors, and the library was in disarray. The collection for this library was reported at 4,639 books with 531 books having been circulated since the beginning of the year and on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the month, 38 books



having been checked out for that month. There were no formal classes held during my time there, but children and teachers made use of the library in the Library Power mode.

Time. The Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS) at Hope Two served as the coordinator of the extended day program. She arrived early and stayed late. It appeared that she was a vital support for the principal and the teachers. Being new to the campus, her constant presence had a calming effect on the students as well as the teachers.

Upon arrival at Hope Two school, the children went to breakfast, then to the playground. When the bell rang teachers and students went to the classroom. Classes began, and morning announcements were made by the principal within the first half-hour of the school day. Students had one recess per day after lunch.

Five teachers complained about the intercom interrupting their classes. The principal told me that she had done a survey earlier in the year and teachers had voiced greater concern about assembly and pull-out interruptions than about the intercom. She went on to say that after discussing the problem with the teachers, they agreed that frequent assemblies were the problem.

While I was at the school there was an impromptu afternoon assembly regarding guidelines for the candy sale that had been approved by the school improvement team. There was also a day for picture taking; and at 11:30 a.m. one morning, there was a school improvement team meeting to which teachers who serve as committee chairpersons were called. Ancillary teachers were sent to watch their classes.

While I was observing in two different classrooms, parents came in and interrupted the lesson: one parent wanted to give the teacher picture money and the other came in to accuse the teacher of not having given her child his homework assignment. The principal had said that parents were not allowed to interrupt during instruction time.

The teachers were scheduled to meet weekly as a grade level. The principal and the teacher for instructional support attended these meetings. Several teachers commented that they hardly ever got to meet because the guidance counselor or other ancillary teachers always canceled classes. One of the kindergarten teachers complained that the music teacher never came.

Teachers mentioned that they appreciated being a part of the governance structure. They said that they spend summers and long hours during the school year giving input and actually doing the work of the school improvement team.

**Time on Task (TOT).** For actual classroom time spent with teachers actively engaging students in learning, schoolwide data from the interactive TOT scans showed 55.60% of the children interactively engaged with the teacher, 31.31% of the students not interactively engaged with the teacher but engaged in other independent or group instructional activity; and 13.09% of the students exhibiting off-task behaviors.

### Character

Teachers. There were thirteen regular classroom teachers of reading at Hope Two School. The teachers had been teaching at Hope Two School an average of 7.5 years and they had an average of 11.5 years total teaching experience. Of these teachers, 33% had

advanced degrees. The teachers were involved in professional development activities organized at the school level in the monthly half-day meetings, interschool visitations, Internet workshops, science workshops, and K-3 Initiative training. Some of the teachers did presentations at other schools and for parents of Hope Two students.

Four of the thirteen teachers were new to the school and new to the profession. By their own admission, three of the four were enthusiastic and flexible professionals who were convinced that they could make a difference in the lives of the children they taught. They said that as new teachers they felt accepted and appreciated. The other novice teacher was leaving the profession.

The veteran teachers of Hope Two School described themselves as being angry with the administration for not preparing them for the population change at their school. They complained about school governance taking too much time away from children, while wondering why they are not asked for input. They were overwhelmed; yet, they said that they were flexible. They said that there was no continuity at the school. Many of them described themselves as good disciplinarians.

Interviews with two veteran, master teachers were strained. They were cooperative, but at the end of the formal process they each talked about issues of concern, mostly the children's lack of discipline. Following up later with one of the teachers who had shed a few tears, it turned out that a "group" of second graders under the leadership of a new student had formed a pact to get rid of her. The principal had summoned the appropriate social service agencies to assist with the problem.

One of the teachers enlisted the services of her scientist husband, who worked at one of the plants along the Mississippi River, to help bring the computers at the school to a workable level. Weekends, nights, and holidays, this family had worked to bring this school's technology capability past the point of more affluent schools in the district.

**Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction.** When asked to describe how they think most of their students learn to read, the responses from the professionals fell into the following categories: Repetition of words —18%

Experience with language—36%

Phonics —18%

Balanced —28%

**Students.** Teachers described the students they teach as being at-risk and coming from low-income families with young, single parents. Students were rough, defensive, and developmentally behind. These children had to survive on their own. They had lost their innocence, were overly exposed to drugs and sex, and not allowed to be children. One teacher cited an incident to convey that the students did not know how to play; playfulness, turned to anger. She went on to say, “One child told our class, ‘I felt bad when daddy shot the bed.’ ”

The teacher of the special transition class, created for low achieving behavior problems, made it clear that the students were smart, but that this environment did not allow them to use their intelligence they have. The same teacher said that of the original twenty-three students in her class, only thirteen were still enrolled at the beginning of

March, which indicated that there was a high mobility rate at this school. Regarding perceptions of students, a kindergarten teacher said that the children are not mean in pre-kindergarten.

A more positive way teachers described the children was that they loved to go to the computer lab for Wiggle Works: The Scholastic Beginning Literacy System (Scholastic, 1998), an individualized, literature-based, electronic-writing program. They took pride in reading their creative writings to the class. In a first-grade room there were seven children reading above grade level. Some of the students went to other classes for reading instruction.

While observing a second-grade class, I noticed that two children had completed their assignments. One guided the other over to the reading nook while saying, "Let's go over here and do buddy reading."

Principal. The principal of Hope Two School is a master of reading instruction having been a teacher trainer in this area her whole career. Not surprisingly, her strength was professional development and she was greatly appreciated by the teachers. She set the instructional tone of the school by supporting innovation. She attended collaborative grade-level meetings, and, with the assistance of the TIS, she assisted with implementing these innovations. She served on many committees for the district, having recently chaired the committee for creating the new district report card. Teachers reported that her being called away often kept the principal from visiting their classrooms. Some said she only came to the classroom during formal observations required for evaluation purposes.

However, several teachers pointed out that if you invited her to the classroom for something special, she would make every effort to come.

**Ancillary Teachers.** There were many ancillary teachers at Hope Two School. I observed the guidance counselor conduct a lesson on forgiveness. Having just witnessed this lesson, I suggested to the second-grade teacher, for whom a group of students had attempted to alter her career path, that she consult with the guidance counselor about the problematic students. She dismissed my suggestion with the response that the counselor's solution would be to have her complete a million forms. She said that she did not need to add more paperwork to her list of existing problems.

There were teachers who pulled children out of class for dyslexia instruction, Reading Recovery, and resource services. Whole classes had music, physical education, French in fourth and fifth grades, and guidance. Library and Wiggle Works were either part of center time or scheduled by the classroom teacher.

Since the word ancillary suggests support, the classroom teachers spoke most highly of the Wiggle Works coordinator and the parent liaison. The Wiggle Works coordinator worked with students before school, after school, or whenever she had a free moment. The parent liaison got in her car and tried to locate parents for the teachers. Many of the parents did not have telephones or cars; the parent liaison was the communication link between the home and school. Ironically, these two highly touted helpers were not certificated personnel, nor did they have college degrees.

**Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS).** This professional served as the “clarifier” for the teachers. The principal said that she had the TIS work with teachers on issues, especially issues that may threaten them, and then she followed up. The TIS often conveyed messages to the teachers for the principal. She oversaw the extended day program and welcomed children from the buses in the morning. She provided direct services to teachers in the classroom and helped to set up interschool visitations. She also worked closely with the parent liaison who, like the TIS, was highly regarded by the teachers.

### Plot

Instructional Practices. “I don’t feel you can teach reading, you have to guide the children and lead them into the strategies they need.” These are the words of a first-year teacher. She and her first grade teaching partner used balanced reading strategies for their below-level students and accelerated the basal stories for above-level readers. They taught reading twice a day. Shared writing was an important part of the first-grade program. The student wrote in one color and the teacher used another color to remind them of authorship as they went through the drafting process. The teacher also did model writing. Some of the strategies used by these teachers included: read aloud, shared reading, buddy reading, whisper reading, familiar rereading, framing words, chunking words, and silent reading. One of the first-grade teachers stated that reader’s theatre, art, and music were not emphasized by the administration. Consequently, they were not included in lessons.

As a part of the schoolwide reading goal, all students strove for the “gold,” which was reading a certain number of books, a standard set at each grade level. Reading incentives were important to the students at Hope Two School. They also had the Accelerated Reader Program, which included incentives.

Wiggle Works is an individualized literature-based reading program integrated with a writing/language arts program. Children wrote stories in the Wiggle Works computer lab and proudly read their creations to the rest of the class. Upper-level children used story starters, webbing, Venn Diagrams, Jeopardy, and context vocabulary clues to help with their daily writing and journaling.

Reading instruction was delivered differently from grade to grade at Hope Two. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers, having immersed themselves into the K-3 Initiative, opened the collapsible doors between them so as to keep in constant communication. Second-grade teachers planned weekly and complemented each other with their differing styles. Third grade had one teacher who was moving quickly into the K-3 initiative, while the other was holding on to ability grouping for basal lessons, much like the second-grade teachers. One fourth-grade teacher, who did not plan to return, dispensed worksheets, while the veteran fourth-grade teacher taught whole class basal and grouped students based on skill needs. One of the fifth-grade teachers followed the same format as the veteran fourth-grade teacher. The other fifth-grade teacher used literature as the base of her reading program as she did in Library Power. The master



teacher of the combination class taught at-risk students using innovative, non-traditional techniques while integrating reading across the curriculum.

**Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET).** To get a different perspective of classroom management and instruction during the classroom observation, a part of the data collection process included recording instructional behaviors exhibited by teachers using the LCET from the Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness Pilot Program (1997). Individual scores were compiled to reflect one grade- level score from which a schoolwide score was determined. A four-point rating scale (1-4) on the LCET scale indicates from unacceptable (1) to outstanding (4) behaviors. A rating of 2.5 is the mid-point.

- An overall schoolwide score of 3.40 on Management, Component A: “The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.21 on Management, Component B: “The teacher maximizes the amount of time available for instruction.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 3.12 on Management, Component C: “The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.94 on Instruction, Component A: “The teacher delivers instruction effectively.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.94 on Instruction, Component B: “The teacher presents appropriate content.”

- An overall schoolwide score of 2.77 on Instruction, Component C: “The teacher provides opportunities for students to be involved in the learning process.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.70 on Instruction, Component D: “The teacher assesses pupil progress.”

Overall schoolwide ratings on all components on the LCET for Hope Two were above midpoint.

**Classroom Grouping Strategies.** Nine of the regular classrooms at Hope Two used centers in their grouping of students for reading instruction. Students went to centers while the teacher was having guided reading or directed reading. Guided reading is a strategy of balanced reading espoused by the K-3 Initiative while directed reading is a part of the traditional basal reading approach. Centers at Hope Two included literacy centers and learning centers within the classroom walls as well as the school library, the campus, and the Wiggle Works computer lab outside the classroom.

The upper level teachers did not use centers, but they incorporated buddy study which is a variation of cooperative learning. They did whole-class basal or literature based instruction, then worked with small groups of students in specific areas of need. These were called skills groups and were not stagnant; they changed as students’ needs changed. Upper-level teachers said that they wanted to departmentalize, but when the population changed they thought it would be better to keep the same children all day to cut down on discipline problems.

**Communication.** Teachers communicated frequently at Hope Two School. They were seen in the faculty lounge before school, at recess, and during their duty-free lunch breaks. The whole faculty met half a day monthly for district-mandated staff development and on another half-day for grade-level conferencing. Additionally, grade levels were supposed to meet weekly for an hour during the school day. These meetings, however, were contingent upon the ancillary teacher not canceling the scheduled class for the children. Even with these times scheduled for collaborative conferencing, teachers at Hope Two voiced concern for lack of information. One teacher said, “Knowing the benchmarks is the only way I know what is supposed to go on in upper and lower grades.” Teachers repeatedly made comments that signaled their disenchantment with the way they were treated by district administrators. One of the issues was the districtwide mathematics curriculum review display to which they had not been invited. They were confident that if the information had reached the school, the principal would have put the notice in their mailboxes in the form of a memo. That was the agreement resulting from a survey regarding the intercom being a disturbance; the principal agreed to put important things in writing.

Efforts were being made to get students in upper grades to buddy with lower-level students as “teacher buddies.” This was a new activity scheduled to take place once a month.

**Assessment.** When asked about assessment in the interviews, one teacher quipped, “It is not something for someone to decide whether I am a good teacher or not,

but it is for me to use to guide my teaching.” One teacher said that assessment is something you show to the school improvement team, while another said it is for teachers to show to parents. However, the consensus was that teachers assess to see whether children were learning or not and determine the next instructional steps by using the assessment information. One of the first-grade teachers approached the principal with the idea of looping, of following her children to second grade. Her reason for making the request was that she knew her children, and she knew what they needed.

The school had a schoolwide writing rubric that was adopted after pilot testing. The rubric was used for work that was placed in each student’s writing portfolio. There were five components: response, organization, elaboration, mechanics, sentence structure. They used a Likert Scale (1–4) for scoring. When asked what assessment measures they used, Hope Two teachers stated those listed in Figure 4.2.3, referenced by the purposes for the assessment.

**Goals.** Hope Two School set goals to improve student achievement, parental involvement, and student attitude and behavior. The school promoted reading through the Star Readers program. Designations of red, green, blue, and gold set the benchmarks for students to measure their progress. Appropriate criteria for each designation was determined for each grade level by the teachers at that grade level. This school goal was an important carryover from Library Power.

**Mandates.** The teachers voiced concern about things being too scattered and inconsistent, such as that the district mandating assessment tools like the Developmental

Reading Assessment (DRA), but not providing the materials to carry out the directive.

The teachers appeared disgruntled with not having the “whole picture.” They were concerned that with the high level of mobility of their students, the lack of districtwide curriculum made it very difficult to meet student needs.

<b>Hope Two Literacy Assessment Guide</b>	
<b>Purposes For Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Assessment Practices or Tools</b>
Determine overall reading ability	Multiple sources: Wiggle Works, Reading Recovery teacher assessment; basal tests, graded word lists, observation survey, informal reading inventories, observation survey, standardized tests
Examine use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues	Writing products, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, school-adopted writing rubric, discussion, dictation, running record, shared writing
Analyze ability to make meaning from a printed page	Oral reading with expression, story map, Venn Diagram, self-evaluation, homework check, group testing
Determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas	Paper/pencil tests, journal writing, discussion, pre/post testing, daily practice, story mapping, shared writing
Determine strengths and needs to become a more proficient reader	Running record, portfolio with a checklist, looping, observation survey, oral reading

Figure 4.2.3  
Hope Two Assessment Guide

**Needs.** When asked what three actions would help to make reading instruction more effective, ten teachers wanted more consumable materials and updated classroom libraries, nine teachers wanted a lower pupil/teacher ratio, seven wanted more administrative support, five wanted increased parental support, four wanted more time, three wanted more staff development opportunities, two wanted help with discipline, and one response each for: more integrated curriculum, cross-level family grouping, updated classroom library, technology, and merit pay.

## **Hope One School**

### **Setting**

**Place.** Hope One School is 31,250 square feet and was built in 1964 on a 9.5 acre site in a quiet rural community. Renovations were made to the library in 1966 and the original facility was air conditioned in 1973. There are sixteen permanent classrooms in this school, twelve of which house the regular classroom teachers. The facility is in disrepair with buckets placed strategically in classrooms to protect the new carpet from rain dripping through the unpatched roof.

According to district records, there were 209 students enrolled in grades K-5 at the time this research was conducted. The school had been reconfigured from a Kindergarten, fourth-, and fifth-grade school in 1995–96 to a kindergarten through fifth-grade leveled school in 1996–97 as a result of a revised desegregation court order. Absenteeism was not particularly high among the regular classroom teachers but was very high among support personnel. Faculty changes took place and the long-reigning principal of the school had taken sabbatical leave just as the 1997–98 school year began. Therefore, a replacement principal was appointed as the new school year began.

When asked if they would describe their school as a good school, the teachers were divided. Generally, they were split on most of the issues prompted by this inquiry. The new teachers to the school described it as a small, closed environment. The teacher who had been at the school the longest defended the school saying that she enjoyed the school and the parents. She suggested that the other teachers needed to try to become a part of the community. Some of the teachers exuded optimism and pride at the success

they were having as their students' were learning to read; the opposite reaction was evident with others. Interestingly enough, the pessimism was not relegated to either upper or lower grade-level teachers. Pessimism was pervasive. Support personnel at the school had an impact on the reading program, namely the librarian. Electronic library information was neither available for student self check-out nor for reporting circulation figures. This handicap caused the hard-working librarian to spend much time on clerical tasks away from the students. Boxes of books that she was responsible for disseminating piled up in the library. The Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS) assumed the task of getting the Accelerated Reading Program online in classrooms, varying from other schools where the Accelerated Reading Program was done schoolwide through the library. The principal said that one of her goals was to get the library up to standard during the school year.

**Classroom.** Hope One classroom environments were different from classroom to classroom and within some classrooms from day to day. Kindergarten and third grade were the only levels that gave the appearance of similarity in physical setting, thus demonstrating consistency within grade level. Furniture in five of the twelve classrooms was placed in a linear, sequential fashion focusing on the teacher. Seven classrooms had furniture placed to facilitate a more open, student-centered environment. Eight of the twelve classrooms had kidney-shaped tables indicative of small group, versus whole-class, reading instruction. This piece of furniture is usually purchased in most schools for use with smaller children, however, fourth- and fifth-grade classes had kidney-shaped tables that were noticeably absent from lower-level classrooms. Eight of the classrooms

had centers and three had a computer with only one in use during reading instruction.

Half of the classrooms were untidy in appearance. In three of the classrooms, there was no display of student work.

**Contents.** There were many different kinds of materials used to teach reading at Hope One School, from spaghetti and pudding to basal readers and handwriting worksheets. I asked the veteran librarian at Hope One for circulation and book collection information when I first arrived at the site. She went away to a conference for several days, so I asked the principal for the information. She apologized when she told me that the information was not available; getting the library online was one of her main goals for the year. Therefore, a report of library circulation and book collection information is not available for Hope One. Figure 4.1.4 gives a listing of instructional materials observed at Hope One School.

**Time.** Children at Hope One arrived at school and went to the playground until time for class to begin. The children had a morning recess and an afternoon recess. The TIS and the principal greeted the buses in the morning. During my stay at the school I noticed that morning announcements included a devotion, administrative information, the pledge, and character of the week reminder. The announcements were lengthy and the time of delivery varied from day to day. A common complaint among teachers was the lack of coordination of ancillary services which caused many interruptions during reading instruction. This was one of the issues that the teachers and the substitute principal hoped to have addressed with the school improvement team.



<b>Hope One Instructional Materials to Support Literacy</b>	
<b>Literacy Event</b>	<b>Material</b>
To organize the environment and make school life run smoothly	N-S-E-W signs, clocks, timers Manuscript/cursive alphabet letters above chalkboard Environmental print Centers (in 8/13 classrooms) Conduct chart on each desk
To facilitate multi-sensory learning activities which include all types of communicative and visual art forms	Puzzles, maps, games, electronic games Writing materials Computers (in use in 1/12 classrooms), software Music, films, taped stories Interactive bulletin board Imaginary line paper for writing Cooking supplies and utensils
To teach specific literacy skill materials	Multiple copies of leveled books Basal texts, test-taking booklets Handwriting sheets; penmanship Material correlated to basal stories Phonics charts Harris-Jacobsen Word Lists Dolch Sight Word List Flash cards, vocabulary cards
To guide with materials and special spaces that support realistic literacy behavior	Reading Center - buddy reading, independent reading Literacy centers Multiple copies of leveled books Reference books Accelerated Reader Programs Magnetic board with letters Making books

**Figure 4.1.4**  
**Hope One Instructional Materials to Support Literacy**

The timing for pull-out and whole-class ancillary instruction was the subject of concern. On two occasions in particular, an ancillary teacher was not in her scheduled class because she had been pulled away to cover another class. I observed several situations while at the school when legitimate emergency situations in one classroom interrupted reading instruction elsewhere.

Kindergarten teachers at Hope One said they teach reading throughout the day while a fourth-grade teacher reported that she spent most of her day disciplining children.

This same teacher said that she spent two hours per week preparing work-habit reports for parents, only to have them ignored. Other teachers complained that assessment was time-consuming, and the correct time for teacher training for new initiatives is before school begins in the fall.

There was a computer lab where students were scheduled in small groups twice per week for 30 minutes of instruction in reading and mathematics. There appeared an overly relaxed scheduling arrangement among the classroom teachers and the ancillary teachers. When I was observing in a first-grade classroom, the computer monitor came to the door and the teacher called names of students to go to the computer lab as a reward for good behavior.

I arrived to observe a kindergarten class one morning, and the librarian was “babysitting” by her own admission. This was the scheduled day for weekly kindergarten grade-level meeting. I decided to stay in the classroom and observe her lesson while waiting for the teacher to return. The lesson consisted of a loud television with few children paying attention. The grandmother volunteer assigned to the class was doing her best to keep order. Within a few minutes of my arrival, the music teacher replaced the librarian; she rolled a cart into the classroom filled with teaching aids.

The music teacher taught her lesson to a highly inattentive group of five-year-olds and left the classroom before the return of the classroom teacher. Again, it was the grandmother volunteer who attempted to keep order. When the teacher returned it was as though a different group of children had taken over the bodies of the those I had seen just

minutes before; this teacher was in charge. She quickly organized the children to facilitate a guided reading lesson.

**Time on Task (TOT).** A schoolwide snapshot of time spent with teachers actively engaging students in learning was taken with the use of the Revised Classroom Snapshot. The interactive time on task (TOT) scans showed 51.28% of the children interactively engaged with the teacher 30.53% of the students not interactively engaged with the teacher, but engaged in other independent or group instructional activity; and 18.19% of the students exhibiting off-task behaviors.

### Character

Teachers. There were twelve regular classrooms at Hope One School: two kindergarten teachers, two first-grade teachers, two second-grade teachers, a second/third-grade combination teacher, two fourth-grade teachers and one fifth-grade teacher. The veteran fifth grade teacher had been on sick leave, and finally in late March made the decision to take leave for the remainder of the school year. A substitute teacher was hired to replace her.

As reported by the principal, absenteeism was not abnormally high among regular classroom teachers but very high among support personnel. The teachers on staff at the school had an average of fourteen years total teaching experience, with an average of 3.3 years of service at Hope One School. Of the teachers, 55% had bachelor's degrees, 27% had master's degrees, and 18% had master's degrees plus 30 hours.

The teachers were involved in staff development for K-3 Initiative and in sharing at half-day district-mandated professional development. The principal was viewed as a

staff developer who shared current research findings and encouraged interclass and interschool visitations. The lower level teachers were excited about getting books, materials, computers, and other supplemental materials to help their students learn to read.

Lower-grade teachers were very proud of their students. First graders were reading leveled books and commenting to the teacher that they were “too easy.” Their teachers were very pleased with the results from the newly implemented K-3 strategies. Other teachers voiced their frustration at not being appreciated and not being included in the governance process. These same teachers complained about the lack of schoolwide discipline. There was a school level discipline plan that was not being implemented.

**Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction.** When asked to describe how they think most of their students learn to read, the responses from the professionals fell into the following categories: Repetition of words —55%

Experience with language—18%

Phonics —27%

Teachers at Hope One described themselves as being hard-working teachers who taught children the way they were taught themselves. A few of the teachers claimed that all of the teachers were close and that they all worked well together.

**Students.** When asked to describe the children who attend this school, teachers gave varying descriptors. In speaking of their students, some teachers said that students were angry, outspoken, and stubborn; that children were out of control and ran the school instead of the adults. These children lacked motivation and could not think for

themselves. Other teachers said that they were sensitive children, starved for affection and eager to learn. Others said that they were from economically disadvantaged homes, some with mental problems, and some with medical problems. One teacher said that they should know how to read when they get to fourth grade; she shouldn't have to teach them to read.

Principal. A new principal was assigned to head Hope One School as the 1997-98 school year was beginning. Schedules were set, and staff was in place. Since her arrival, she had encouraged the teachers and the children; she also did demonstration lessons with several classes. Some of the teachers voiced their approval of her support for the new reading program. She suggested that teachers read to their students everyday. According to different teachers, the principal visited some classrooms daily and visited some classrooms very seldom. The principal averaged about one classroom visit per week according to teacher reports.

The principal said that the Title I program at the school was of poor quality. As a part of the school improvement process, she hoped to work with the school improvement team to make changes in the school using Title I school budget. She provided teachers with money for reading materials and volunteer help. Several of the teachers said that they hoped she would return as principal the following year.

**Ancillary Teachers.** It was reported that kindergarten has the grandparent volunteers, first grade has Reading Recovery, second and third grade had an ancillary reading and math teacher who helped in the classroom, and fourth and fifth had an ancillary teacher. I did not see any of these ancillary teachers helping to teach reading in

any of the classes I observed. There were student teachers teaching in three of the twelve classes I observed, in second, third, and fourth grades.

The Reading Recovery teacher came to get a student from a first-grade class, and the teacher asked her to help students with an assignment. She stayed and worked with a group of students instead of pulling the scheduled child for instruction. The first-grade teachers voiced confidence in the Reading Recovery teacher who had literacy groups in each of their classrooms twice a week. “We appreciate that the Reading Recovery teacher gives us recommendations about working with our students,” one teacher volunteered. There was a computer teacher who worked on skills with students, yet the teachers did not plan together or give input as to student need.

**Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS).** The TIS helped to set up the Accelerated Reading Program on computer in one of the fourth-grade teacher’s classroom. The TIS brought instructional material and unit paraphernalia to them when they requested it. According to lower-grade-level teachers, she helped with implementing the K-3 Initiative. She met weekly with teachers by grade level, a role previously assumed by the librarian. One of the teachers was critical of the TIS for not responding to her requests for help with teaching reading.

### Plot

**Instructional Practices.** Students from one of the first-grade classes could be seen reading in the hallways, on the playground, and in upper-level reading groups at Hope One School. The teacher of these first graders was successfully implementing the strategies of the K-3 Initiative of which she said, “This program is great because the

children have to work to learn. The teacher is not doing all the work.” She, along with the two kindergarten teachers and the combination teacher, was implementing the K-3 strategies wholeheartedly, but with varying degrees of success. One strategy they employed for students who read below grade level was to have them take several books home for rereading. This was counter to typical expectation that lower achievers do less work. Other teachers were still using basal techniques organized by whole-class or ability groups. One kindergarten teacher emphasized the necessity for a strong focus on skill development through repetition.

Collaborative planning by the two third-grade teachers was evidenced in the lessons they taught. Even though one had a student teacher, they both approached their reading lessons from the same perspective. In both classrooms there was a tranquil air of mutual respect between teacher and student and among students. I observed a cooking experience while visiting one of these reading classes. The third- grade teachers were adept at bringing classes to closure by preparing students for the next day’s work.

The two fourth-grade classes were similar in their physical design, but different in execution. These teachers combined literature and basal instruction in their lessons. One had working centers; the other had center designations with children working at their seats. The librarian had recently begun taking fourth-grade reading groups from the latter fourth-grade class. The former teacher supervised a student teacher who was teaching a lesson on test preparation while the classroom teacher conferenced with individual students about novels they were reading.

I observed the substitute fifth-grade teacher who was not certificated and openly shared that he did not know how to teach reading. The principal said she was pleased to have this substitute agree to teach for the remainder of the school year, since this particular class had successfully changed the semester plans of several potential substitute teachers before this one. In fact, as a strong disciplinarian, the TOT (Time on Task) scores from this class helped improve the school TOT scores.

The reading class was traditional; students came to the front of the class to read orally. They did assignments in the reading workbooks when everyone finished oral reading. The teacher praised the students, and they responded with respect and perhaps a bit of fear. There were assignments on the board and notations from the French lesson held earlier in the day.

**Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET).** A part of the data collection process included recording instructional behaviors exhibited by teachers using the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching (LCET) from the Louisiana State Department of Education School Effectiveness Pilot Program (1997). Ratings (1-4) on the LCET scale indicate from unacceptable (1) to outstanding (4). A rating of 2.5 is the mid-point. The schoolwide scores follow:

- An overall schoolwide score of 2.78 on Management, Component A: “The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.92 on Management, Component B: “The teacher maximizes the amount of time available for instruction.”



- An overall schoolwide score of 2.91 on Management, Component C: “The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.80 on Instruction, Component A: “The teacher delivers instruction effectively.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.65 on Instruction, Component B: “The teacher presents appropriate content.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.57 on Instruction, Component C: “The teacher provides opportunities for students to be involved in the learning process.”
- An overall schoolwide score of 2.57 on Instruction, Component D: “The teacher assesses pupil progress.”

Overall schoolwide ratings on all components of the LCET for Hope One School were above mid-point.

**Classroom Grouping Strategies.** Teachers implementing K-3 strategies grouped their students by instructional reading level for guided reading and provided time for partner activities. The teachers had from two to four reading groups. In some situations students joined higher-grade-level reading groups for guided reading instruction.

There was no departmentalization at Hope One. Four of the twelve classrooms did not have centers. Classrooms with centers had names such as pen-pal center, overhead center, reading, math, science, art, geography, listening, writing, making books, and reading around the room. Except in the fourth-grade class where centers were a structured part of reading, the center activities at Hope One were extremely shallow. For

example, activities were either not challenging enough or too difficult. In all but one classroom, behavior problems seemed to result from poorly planned center activities.

Communication. Weekly grade-level meetings and monthly staff development meetings were an important way that teachers communicated. The teachers had been asked by the principal to fill out a “wish list,” which was a new experience for most of them. One of the teachers felt left out of the decision-making process and was quite verbal about her feelings. The other teachers, however, said they appreciated the opportunity to give input and to meet regularly while maintaining their own teaching styles.

One way that the teachers talked about communicating with parents was sending information home regularly. Several teachers said that they were not as diligent about sending papers home as they had been in the past. The previous principal would check to see that teachers sent papers home every other week.

Assessment. When asked in the interview about assessment, the teachers said that they assess students, not for pass/fail, but to determine what needs to be taught or re-taught. One teacher used assessment for finding out the strategies the students were not using in reading. Some used the running record percentage to give a grade. Some teachers used assessment to validate grades that they gave; and some used it as a self-evaluation tool.

With regard to assessment, one teacher complained that it is too time-consuming; another teacher commented that the basal did not present very many assessment tools.

As an assessment tool used to communicate with the home, a second-grade teacher laminated folders with word lists for each student. The child circled the words he wanted to learn for that night. As he or she learned the words, the teacher highlighted them. The highlighted words would be reviewed everyday until the student mastered that word list, at which time he or she was given another list. The teacher said that when children made the choice, they felt more responsible and they learned the material. Figure 4.2.4 lists assessment measures or tools reported and observed at Hope One School.

<b>Hope One Assessment Guide</b>	
<b>Purpose for Assessment</b>	<b>Possible Assessment Practices or Tools</b>
Determine overall reading ability	Basal tests, observation survey, informal reading inventories, observation survey, graded word lists
Examine use of graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues	Multiple choice, discussion, dictation, running record
Analyze ability to make meaning from a printed page	Oral reading with expression, self-evaluation, homework check, group testing, oral feedback, art form
Determine cognitive concepts and experiential background in various content areas	Paper/pencil tests, journal writing, discussion, pre/post testing, daily practice, story mapping, shared writing
Determine strengths and needs to become a more proficient reader	Running record, language experience, observation survey, oral reading

Figure 4.2.4  
Hope One Assessment Guide

**Goals.** The professionals at Hope One spoke in future tense about goals for the school. With the leadership of the newly appointed principal there was renewed hope.

Long-range plans across grades included sharing in professional development environments so that everyone would know what was expected and move toward

continuity from grade to grade. Teachers said that they thought it was important that they use similar strategies from grade to grade.

As a part of the reading goal, each student signed a contract at the beginning of the year agreeing to read a certain number of books, a minimum of ten books each semester. Student work was sporadically displayed in classrooms; there was a student of the week bulletin board.

**Mandates.** Of the four schools in the study, the teachers at Hope One School voiced the greatest support of the K-3 Initiative. The teachers' only complaint was that the writing component was a bit weak. As far as they were concerned, "this program is promoting what many teachers have been doing for a long time." One of the outcomes, according to a kindergarten teacher, is that "nap time is officially over." Kindergarten students are being treated more like first graders, thus losing their afternoon nap privileges.

The teachers mentioned that they would like to have their own resources in the classroom because there was too much red tape involved in borrowing district-owned equipment and supplies.

**Needs.** When asked what three actions would help make reading instruction more effective, eight teachers said smaller pupil to teacher ratio, seven said more and varied professional development opportunities, five said additional and more meaningful parental involvement, four said additional instructional materials, three said more time for direct instruction, two said they needed help with discipline, two said uninterrupted-

reading block, two said increased technology, and one suggested that the people who make the rules should come into the classrooms more often.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis involves a way of thinking. It refers to a systematic examination of parts, relationships among parts, and their relationship to the whole. Analysis is a search for patterns. As recommended by Spradley (1979) in the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) protocol, I experienced the ethnographic research cycle of asking questions, collecting data, making the ethnographic record, and analyzing that data several times during the course of this study.

In searching for cultural patterns, I recorded what I saw, what people said, and what people did. I made inferences only to begin the questioning again. Close scrutiny of field notes, gleaned from social situations, prompted discovery of cultural patterns in the data which led to the descriptions of cultural behavior, cultural artifacts, and cultural knowledge of cases being studied. Employing the DRS protocol helped to clarify theme designations. The multidimensional grand and mini-tours afforded opportunities to make thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of data and document quotes from participants. These data facilitated the creation of cultural domain analysis, structural questioning, taxonomic analysis, contrast questioning, and componential analysis.

As stated in Chapter Three, the conceptual framework of the first school case study was set up for comparison of subsequent cases to determine the compatibility of the patterns. Themes were documented across cases structured to magnify contrasts among cases. The themes of this inquiry, setting, character, and plot, served to structure the massive amount of information gathered over the semester. These themes are presented

within the DRS structural format beginning with domain analysis, then taxonomic analysis, and finally, componential analysis. Contrasts of similarities and differences among cases are presented to determine aspects of reading instruction that are common to successful schools and absent from unsuccessful schools.

### Domain Analysis

There were many included terms that formed a semantic relationship with cover terms in the cultural domains, or themes, of setting, characters, and plot. Lengthy listings of included terms were positioned in semantic relationship to their cover terms in the Domain Analysis chart (see Appendix M). Each display provided a mechanism to confirm associations among the items within the listing, while posing structural questions leading to the taxonomic analysis within the cultural domains. For each cultural domain an abbreviated domain analysis is presented as a figure in the body of Chapter Five. Setting (see Figure 5.1.1) encompasses the place and the time of the social situation under study. In this inquiry, school, classrooms, and their contents further describe the place while interruptions, idle time, and principal in classroom further describe time.

Cover Term/Domain:	Setting
Semantic Relationship:	<i>is a way to describe the</i>
Included Terms:	school time place classroom contents idle time interruptions

Figure 5.1.1  
Cover Term/Domain: Setting

Character (see Figure 5.1.2) describes people and their relationships as defined within the social situation of the roles they play. Children are central characters taking on the role of student, while adults assume main and supporting roles. Some of the terms included to describe this cultural domain were teacher, student, principal, ancillary teacher.

Cover Term/Domain:	Character
Semantic Relationship:	<i>is a way to describe a</i>
Included Terms:	main central teacher student ancillary teacher principal student teacher supporting

Figure 5.1.2  
Cover Term/Domain: Character

Plot (see Figure 5.1.3) serves to outline the state of being and actions occurring in the social situation under study. Several included terms were instructional practice, goal, communication, assessment, mandate, looping, and methods.

Cover Term/Domain:	Plot
Semantic Relationship:	<i>is a part of the</i>
Included Terms:	instructional practice communication assessment goal mandate looping methods

Figure 5.1.3  
Cover Term/Domain: Plot



Manipulating the data while organizing the cultural domains helped in posing structural questions for taxonomic analysis. The questions helped to draw forth the relationship among all included terms in each domain, to show subset levels, and to show the way each is related to the whole. Data from all sources were used to compile the included terms for each cultural domain, which resulted in triangulation of evidence sources (Yin, 1994). Analysis of data from across sites was done to ascertain common patterns and to document the differences among the cases.

Sorting and organizing, comparing, and contrasting were actions taken to get to the point of structuring the data. At this stage in the data analysis, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed for further analysis of data with continued utilization of the Developmental Research Sequence (Spradley, 1979) for presentation.

### **Taxonomic Analysis**

A detailed taxonomy was created to show the relationships among included terms of the cultural domains (see Appendix N). For each cultural domain an abbreviated taxonomy is presented in the body of Chapter Five. The included terms within the domain *setting* were divided into place and time (see Figure 5.2.1). The place subset addressed those attributes which made up that particular school setting. Community type conveyed whether the school was located in the innercity, in the suburbs, or in a rural setting. Building descriptors provide the age, size, number of classrooms, and renovation history. Class configurations gave details of grade levels. Contents of the school

included instructional materials, furniture placement, books, and additional material resources give insight into the subset of setting, place.

The time subset gave a perspective of the how time was used. When children were not involved in productive activity, they were idle and not engaged in learning. Interruptions took up time. Children on the playground participating in non-academic activities before school describes use of time. Having one or two recesses was a decision impacting the use of time. How often the principal visited the classroom was a way to use time. Teachers planning collaboratively was a way to use time: before school for one-half hour, during school for an hour a week, during school for one-half day per month. Within the classroom, the percentage of time students were interactively involved in learning is yet another way to describe use of time at the school.

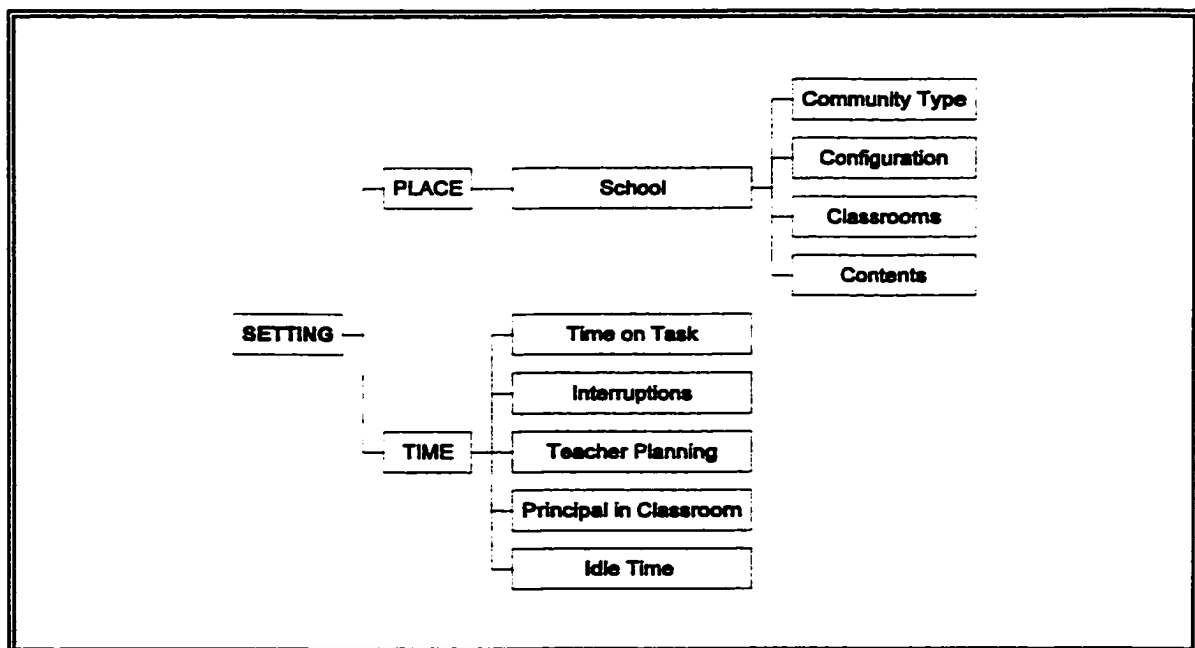


Figure 5.2.1  
Taxonomy: Setting

The included terms within the domain *character* were set apart by their role designation (see Figure 5.2.2). The central subset focused on students and their attributes. The main character subset addressed teachers and principals. Designated as supporting characters were ancillary personnel, Teachers for Instructional Support, and other persons at the school site.

Students were central characters described alternately as angry, smart, well-disciplined, poorly disciplined, crack babies, and products of their environment. Main character roles were played by teachers and the principals, described with varying levels of education and years of experience. These characters expressed hope, excitement, frustration, and despair. The principal as main character was innovative, cautious, fair, and a friend with a good sense of humor.

In this cultural domain supporting roles were designated to ancillary teachers, teachers for instructional support, and other adults who played a part in the school operation. The role of ancillary teacher was different from school to school. These were teachers of music, physical education, guidance, foreign language, language development, Reading Recovery, Academic Readiness, and the librarian. These professionals, hired under the same job description at the district level, performed tasks in dissimilar ways at the school level. Of the professionals encountered during this study, ancillary teacher expectations from site to site were the most inconsistent factor.

Teachers for Instructional Support (TIS) were on staff at three of the four schools. From previous experience with principal helpers, this is the category of professional that I anticipated would have demonstrated least impact on instruction. The teachers for

instructional support in this research study did support teachers as reported by different data sources: teacher interviews, focus group interviews, principal interviews, and prolonged observation.

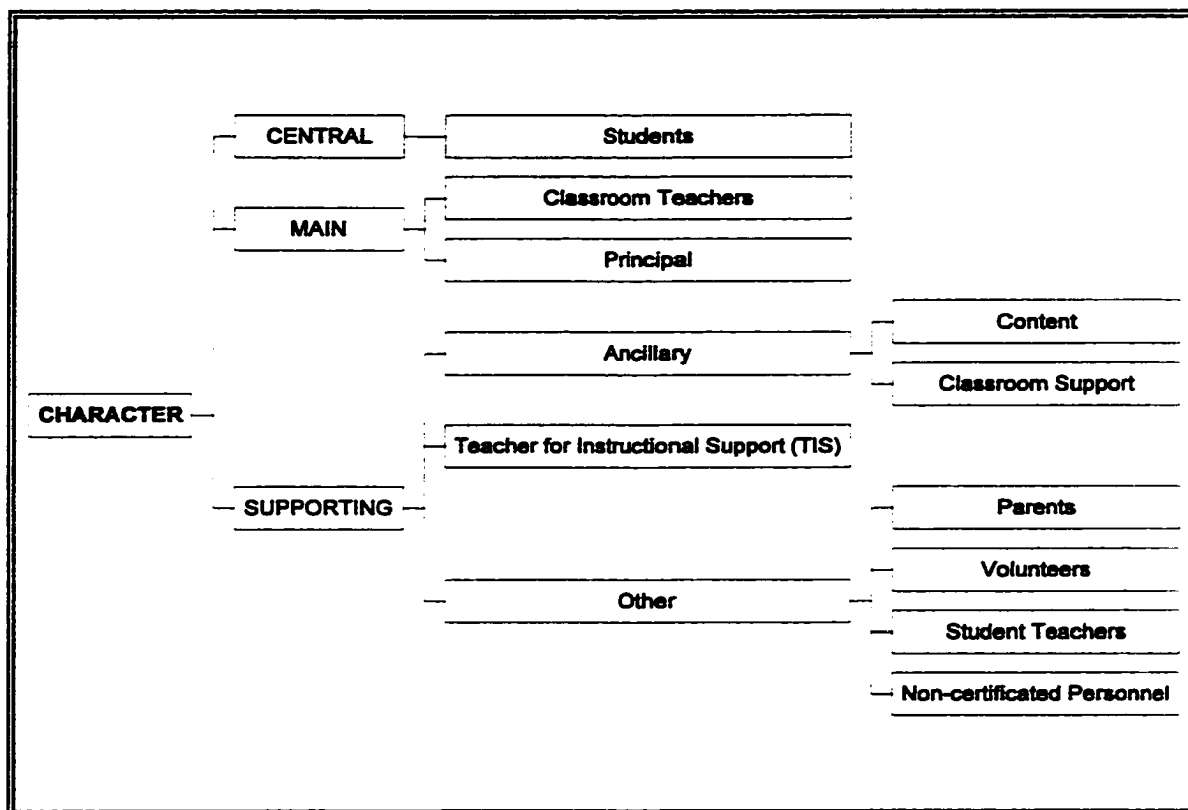


Figure 5.2.2  
Taxonomy: Character

The domain of *plot* serves to outline the action and state of being of the social situation. This domain was divided into the two subsets of instructional practices and communication. These subsets were further subdivided into elements for responding to the structural question which asks, “What is the relationship among all the included terms in this cultural domain?” The abbreviated taxonomy revealed subsets and the way they relate to the whole (see Figure 5.2.3). The first subset showed the different ways students

were grouped for reading instruction, the methods of instruction, special teaching techniques, and scores on the LCET (Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching) which gave a school by school perspective of effective teaching from one rater's observations. The second subset shows the different elements of communication. Assessment practices and measures were used to inform instruction. Goals communicated what people in schools considered worthy of striving to attain. Mandates were directives that came from a higher power. Different schools received such communication in varying ways demonstrating varying degrees of commitment. Needs are very real and serve as a communication tool in the cycle of goal setting and plan

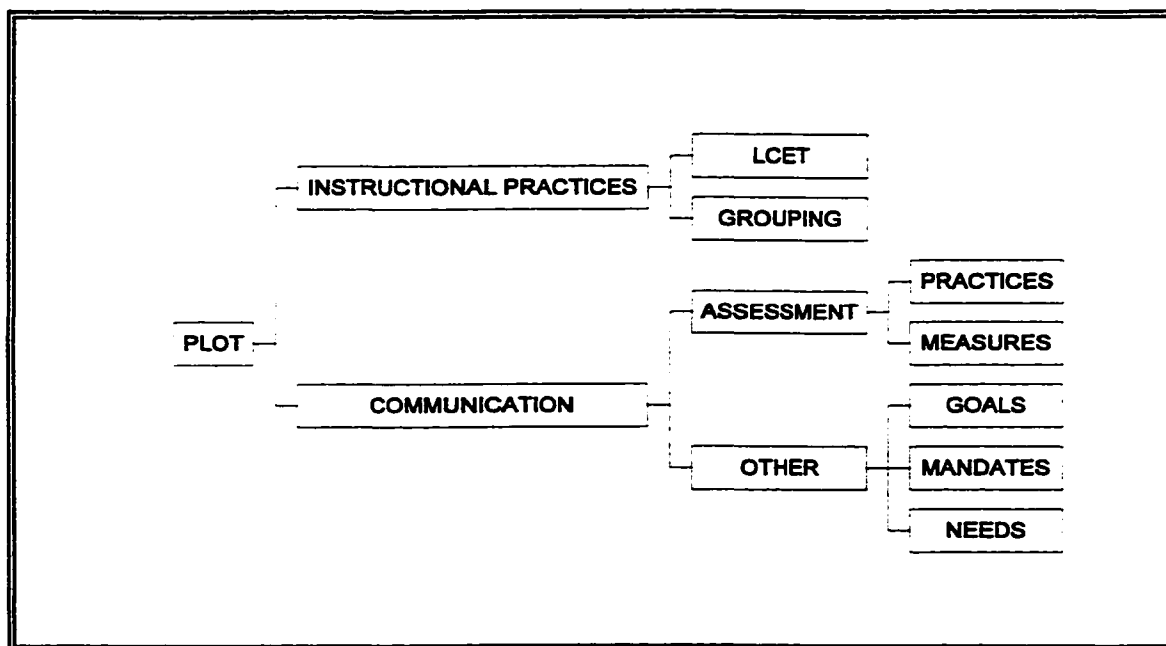


Figure 5.2.3  
Taxonomy: Plot

implementation. Additional included terms that were a part of the communication cover term, but not the aforementioned subsets, fell under the category of "other."

### **Componential Analysis**

To give substance to meeting the purpose of this inquiry, contrast questions were asked to determine similarities and differences of reading instruction at differentially successful schools. As stated earlier, this multiple case study was designed to describe and analyze reading instruction and to connect themes that provide contrasts between and among cases. The three domains emerged through the course of this endeavor providing such a mechanism. For each domain, contrast questions were posed. The subset questions, or parts, were examined first, following an inductive process which lead to the creation of componential analysis displayed by dimensions of contrast. Comments addressing dimensions of contrast are included in the body of this narrative. Commentary is also given regarding elements for which there was uniformity among schools.

The componential analysis for the setting domain supports fifteen dimensions of contrast by school site (see Figure 5.3.1). Place as a part of the *setting* showed different site location with size and relative physical condition. These attributes were neutral in meeting the purpose of this inquiry with the exception of the leaking roof at Hope One School. Ironically, of the schools in the study Hope One, built in 1964, was not the oldest. Hope Two, built in 1955, was the oldest; Star Two, built in 1973, the newest, and, Star One was constructed in 1959.

The only school whose personnel commented on the cafeteria was Star Two where the cafeteria is designated as a quiet zone. The issue arose when a third grade teacher verbally confronted a resource teacher in the cafeteria in front of the children. Having the cafeteria as a quiet zone suggested that the incident could not be masked by

the typical noises of a school cafeteria. All classrooms in the study were considered a part of the main structure; that is, none were temporary buildings. At each school, there were a few disorderly classrooms; however, 50% of the classrooms observed at Hope One were untidy and in general disarray.

Many teachers had learning center signs in their classrooms. As indicated by student behaviors at centers, there appeared a general lack of teacher preparation for implementing centers at three schools in the study. There was a marked difference between learning center activity at Star One and the other three sites. Throughout Star One, centers were highly structured with no more than two students allowed at one time. There was an abundance of rich material, yet an absence of choice. At the other sites, in varying degrees, there was relative decision-making involved at centers but few activities from which to choose.

Contrasting library services available for students across these sites made for an interesting analysis. The Star One librarian, who was relatively new to the school, had taken leave for the spring semester. The principal selected a dependable substitute in lieu of accepting a librarian sent from the district human resources department who had never taught elementary school. Star Two had the highest quality library program in this study. The librarian had been involved in the previous initiative, Library Power, but never gave up her role as teacher of library skills. Therefore, when the district abandoned Library Power with the adoption of the K-3 Initiative, the Star Two School librarian moved cautiously into the new initiative while tacitly avoiding actions contrary to her basic program.

Hope Two and Hope One librarians did not appear to do as well. Complaints at Hope Two were related to lack of scheduling whole classes for instruction in library

Componential Analysis Setting Domain				
Dimensions of Contrast	Star One	Star Two	Hope Two	Hope One
General Classroom Appearance	Neat	Neat	Neat	Messy
# Centers by Classroom	15/15	13/15	9/13	1/12
Library Collection	7,086 books	9,217 books	4,639 books	not available
Library Scheduling	Weekly	Weekly	Flexible	Flexible
Uninterrupted Reading Block	Yes	No	No	No
Quality of Library Services	Substitute	High	Low	Low
Teachers Get Materials from Principal	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Departmentalized Upper Grades	Yes	Yes	No	No
Combination Class	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Number of Recesses	One	One	One	Two
% Idle Time Observed	6%	11%	13%	18%
Individual A.M. Teacher Planning	Classroom with Students	Classroom with Students	Elsewhere on Campus	Elsewhere on Campus
Grade-Level Planning	7:45-8:20 a.m. Weekly	During School Wkly.&Monthly	During School Wkly.&Monthly	During School Wkly.&Monthly
Grade-Level Planning with Ancillary	Bi-monthly	No	No	No
Principal Classroom Visits	5 X Week	3 X Week	1 X Week	As Needed

Figure 5.3.1  
Componential Analysis: Setting Domain

skills. The teachers were, however, willing to use the library as one of their centers during reading instruction. At Hope One the biggest problem appeared to be the lack of electronic cataloging of material resources. There was also obvious conflict between the librarian's own role expectations and the principal's expectations for the librarian. It was



evident that the librarian had difficulty accepting the TIS's responsibility with grade level collaborative planning, a duty of which the librarian had been relieved. Apparently, the librarian thought that the TIS had usurped her relationship with the teachers.

Star One and Star Two departmentalized instruction in the upper grades. At Star One in fourth and fifth grades, the teachers shared responsibility for reading, language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science. At Star Two the arrangement was similar in fifth grade. But in fourth grade both teachers taught reading while one was responsible for science and mathematics and the other teacher taught social studies and language arts for all fourth graders.

Three of the four schools had combination classes. Hope Two had a transition class that was designed for low-achieving children with behavior problems. This was a class lead by a master teacher who used innovative, non-traditional techniques with the students. There were only thirteen of the original twenty-three students left in her class. This, she said, was the real problem. "If we could get them to stay with us, we could really make a difference," she lamented.

Charts of instructional materials to support literacy by site were included in Chapter Four. For reading methods employed at each school there appeared to be a corresponding adequacy of appropriate teaching material. There were complaints regarding lack of literature books and instructional materials; but the most evident problem was getting the material in the hands of the teachers in a timely fashion. At Hope One and Hope Two there were books that remained boxed during the extent of my visits at those sites. There was concern as well regarding district administrators

mandating specific activities while not providing the resources required to abide by the directive.

In addition to place, the *setting* domain includes questions about time such as two recesses or one, teacher-planning time and place, interruptions, idle time, principal's time in the classroom, and students' time on task (see Figure 5.3.1). At Star One and Star Two the teachers did morning planning in the classroom while children completed review work. At Hope One and Hope Two it was the practice for students to go to the classroom at 8:45 a.m. when the bell rang; their teachers could plan in the classroom or elsewhere in the school. All teachers were required to be on campus at 8:00 a.m. in Read Independent School District during the time this study was conducted.

There were interruptions from the intercom at all schools. Parents were observed interrupting at Star Two and Hope Two. Teachers at these two schools confirmed this as a problem. At Star Two I observed candy being sold at noon, and at Hope Two students were called to an afternoon assembly for candy sale guidelines. During the same week at Hope Two, several teachers were called to a school improvement team meeting at 11:30 a.m. Ancillary staff were assigned to take the classes of the teachers. Time that principals spent in classrooms was reported by the teachers in interviews, in focus group, and self-reported. Principals at Star One and Star Two stated classroom visitation as a priority. Average weekly principal classroom visits for Star One was five, Star Two was three, and Hope One was once; the Hope Two principal was reported to visit classrooms as needed for required observations.

There was much idle time noted at Star Two in the kindergarten and first-grade classrooms; one second-grade teacher did not plan well for the writer's workshop, so many of the children were not continually engaged in instructional activity. At Hope Two one class each at the second-, third-, and fourth-grade levels had students who were idle, and at Hope One kindergarten students were not given appropriate independent activities. Similarly, in one first grade, one second grade, and in the combination class many of the children were off-task. Percentages by school of off-task behavior observed are presented in Figure 5.3.1 within the componential analysis for the setting domain.

There were several layers of *characters* to be contrasted during the course of this inquiry. Central characters were students who were described by teachers in ways that implicitly conveyed their expectations for the students. Only at Star One School did the teachers discuss their students in a positive light. Among the other teachers in the study, there were varying degrees of hopelessness for the children, with Hope Two demonstrating the highest degree of despair.

Teachers as embedded subunits of analysis for this study are at the core. According to Deford (1985), there is a common belief that teachers are decision-makers who process information and act upon these decisions based on their judgments. That is, teachers make decisions about reading instruction in light of the theory, or assumptions they hold about reading and learning. These decisions are based on the teacher's theoretical orientation (see Figure 5.3.2.a). Harste and Burke (1977) propose that a teacher's theoretical orientation establishes expectancies and influences goals, procedures, materials, and classroom interaction patterns. Conflict arises when the

teacher's theoretical orientation or belief system about the way children learn to read is not what is promoted by the administration. An interview question posed to all professional was, "How do you think children learn to read?" The results for each school were included in Chapter Four as a part of the case study. The purpose of the question was to observe the teachers teaching and then to listen to what they said they believe. It was a cursory look for congruence between underlying beliefs, values, and practices at the school level.

Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction				
	Star One	Star Two	Hope Two	Hope One
Word Repetition	56.65%	6.25%	18%	55%
Language Experience	31.25%	50%	36%	18%
Phonics	12.50%	31.25%	18%	27%
Individual Differences	N/A	12.50%	N/A	N/A
Balanced Reading	N/A	N/A	28%	N/A

Figure 5.3.2.a  
Theoretical Orientation in Reading Instruction

Since this topic is worthy of study on its own, this information is presented to show that teachers beliefs about reading instruction do vary and are, perhaps, important enough to discuss. Many teachers made comments which indicated that no one had previously inquired about their belief systems.

Base data about teachers are presented in the character domain componential analysis graphic (see Figure 5.3.2.b). The teachers at Star One considered it to be their school; and the average years of teaching there was twice the average of Hope Two,

<b>Componential Analysis Character Domain</b>				
<b>Dimensions of Contrast</b>	<b>Star One</b>	<b>Star Two</b>	<b>Hope Two</b>	<b>Hope One</b>
Teacher Expectations of Students	High	Mixed	Low	Mixed
School Personnel Absenteeism	Low	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High
Average Teacher Years at School	14	5.3	7.5	3.3
% Teacher Advanced Degree	46%	33%	45%	33%
Principal: Stage of Career	Establishment	Establishment	Disengagement	Exploratory
Principal: Years as Principal	6	4	11	First
Ancillary Supports Reading Teacher	Yes	No	Yes	No
Non-certificated Personnel Support Reading Teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Teacher for Instructional Support	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Students Attend Assemblies Only by Grade Level as Topics Relate to Curriculum	Yes	No	No	No
Student Discipline Problems	No	No	Yes	Yes

**Figure 5.3.2.b**  
**Componential Analysis: Character Domain**

almost three times the average of Star Two, and over four times the average of teaching years at Hope One. The percentage of teachers with advanced degrees was slightly higher at Star One (46%) than Hope Two (45%), with Star Two and Hope One having 33% classroom teachers with advanced degrees. Several of the novice teachers at Star Two were taking classes toward advancing their status. Meeting the principal's expectations, teachers at Star One seldom missed work. Taking sick days because they were allocated was not a part of the Star One culture.

The principals in these schools were highly professional women at different stages in their careers. Likened to the four stages of career development for teachers described

by Super, Thompson, Lindeman, Myers, and Jordaan (1988), principals coming from the teacher ranks possibly go through stages as well. The stages are not always sequential. Some are skipped and some are repeated. The first stage, exploration, is used to describe the person with less than three years of experience who is not certain what the role demands. The establishment stage is where the professional becomes comfortable with the role and moves her interests outside the basic functions to work more closely with other colleagues. The maintenance stage is for the experienced professional who wishes to maintain the status quo. Finally, toward the end of a career, a professional's concern may change depending on level of involvement. This is called the disengagement stage. And at any stage in the teacher's or principal's career, she may withdraw from involvement yet still be employed.

The principals of Star One and Star Two Schools are at the establishment stage. The principal at Hope One is in exploration, while the principal of Hope Two is disengaging in preparation for retirement.

During this study, I experienced a phenomenon captured in 1976 by Parlett and Hamilton (cited in Stake, 1994), suggesting that case researchers enter the scene expecting, even knowing, that certain events, problems, and relationships will be important yet discover that some actually are of little consequence. Going into this study, I had ill-conceived notions about the self-serving role of the TIS. Those misconceptions were quickly laid to rest when I experienced their active presence in their assigned schools. These professionals worked with teachers and made every effort to get the resources they needed. At Hope One there was a bit of friction due to the role previously

played by the librarian in collaborative grade-level planning. Yet, there was a preponderance of professionalism at this school as well as the other schools having benefit of a TIS.

Reflecting on the idea of case researcher expectations, ancillary teachers turned out to be the surprise. Only at Star One were there no obvious problems with ancillary teachers. There was the Title I teacher who worked only with first grade and the speech therapist who pulled students out from kindergarten. The ancillary teacher came to the room to get the students.

The principal at Hope One clearly voiced her concern about ancillary scheduling and lack of a time block devoted solely to language arts. Only on limited occasions did I see the assigned ancillary teacher teaching reading at Star Two and at Hope One. If the ancillary teacher was in the classroom, she was either observing or monitoring individual students. There was little evidence of prior planning with the teacher or evidence of responsibility for particular students or lesson delivery. Considering that ancillary teachers are compensated the same as regular teachers, there appeared an inequitable distribution of responsibility among certified teachers for children learning to read. Given the value placed on the Wiggle Works coordinator and parent liaison at Hope Two, perhaps there are better ways to spend money given the quickly diminishing resource of certified teachers.

The cultural domain *plot* is driven by the two subsets of instructional practices and communication. Instructional practices varied from classroom to classroom at Star Two, Hope Two and Hope One. Only at Star One was there actual grade-level

coordination. As one teachers emphatically said of the principal in the focus group interview at Star One, "Sarah (pseudonym) demands it."

At Star Two School, kindergarten students from the same neighborhoods gathered in three very different classroom environments to receive very different methods of instruction delivered in very different ways, none implementing practices promoted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Except for the retired master teacher substituting for a teacher on leave, the first grade instruction would have been considered as negatively as kindergarten teaching. But as the grade levels increased, so did the quality and coordination of instructional practices. The lack of apparent support from the ancillary teachers did not impede the teachers from second through fifth grades at Star Two School.

At Hope Two the kindergarten and first-grade teachers provided instruction that was appropriate and delivered with expertise and confidence. The second- and third-grade teachers showed less coordination within grade level than in the lower grades. Fourth grade had one master teacher and the other who had announced in early March that she was not returning. Hope Two fifth-grade teachers delivered their lessons in different ways.

Except for one first-grade teacher, Hope One kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teachers showed lack of classroom management skills. Overall the teachers did not have enough material prepared on students' instructional level. Third-grade teachers were the highlight of that school experience. They were a mature, low-key team who planned together. The two fourth-grade teachers had been at the school the longest. One



was adept at grouping students, teaching skills, and using basal practices that included working centers. The other fourth-grade teacher was less confident. The fifth-grade teacher, substituting for the remainder of the year, had no background in the teaching of reading; it seemed obvious he had been hired to keep order.

A chart showing the LCET (Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching) results across schools supports the scripted observations to a relative degree (see Figure 5.3.3.a).

<b>Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching</b>				
<b>Components</b>	<b>Star One</b>	<b>Star Two</b>	<b>Hope Two</b>	<b>Hope One</b>
<b>Management of Environment</b> The teacher maintains an environment conducive to learning	3.16	3.20	3.40	2.78
<b>Management of Time</b> The teacher maximizes the amount of time available for instruction.	3.00	2.97	3.21	2.92
<b>Management of Learning Behaviors</b> The teacher manages learner behavior to provide productive learning opportunities	3.42	3.19	3.12	2.91
<b>Instruction</b> The teacher delivers instruction effectively	3.12	2.89	2.94	2.80
<b>Content of Instruction</b> The teacher presents appropriate content	3.01	2.90	2.94	2.65
<b>Student Involvement with Instruction</b> The teacher provides opportunities for student involvement in the learning process	2.67	2.58	2.77	2.57
<b>Assessment of Instruction</b> The teacher assesses student progress	2.95	2.69	2.75	2.57

Figure 5.3.3.a  
Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching

If anything, the ratings are inflated across the sites. The scoring should therefore be viewed by component with relative differences and similarities from site to site. As noted

in Chapter Four, at Star Two and Hope Two several of the teachers employed strategies similar to those espoused as foundational to an effective elementary reading program in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Communication is a subset of the *plot* domain that is further divided into assessment, goals, mandates, and needs (see Figure 5.3.3.b). Assessment practices from

Componential Analysis: Plot Domain																								
Dimensions of Contrast	Star One						Star Two						Hope Two						Hope One					
Evidence of Collaborative Planning	High						Medium						Medium						Low					
Quality of Instruction:  H= High M=Medium L=:Low	K	1	2	3	4	5	K	1	2	3	4	5	K	1	2	3	4	5	K	1	2	3	4	5
	H	H	H	H	H	M	L	L	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	M	L	H	L	M	M	H	L	L
Consistency Within Grade Levels	6/6						4/6						4/6						3/6					
Level of Classroom Management Skill	High						Adequate						Adequate						Poor					
Schoolwide Assessment	Yes						No						Yes						No					
Consistent Record Keeping	Yes						No						No						No					
Ancillary Inclusion	No						Yes						No						Yes					
-Need Lower Pupil/Teacher Ratio	7/30 Responses						10/27 Responses						9/37 Responses						8/34 Responses					
-Need more books and current Material	7/30						10/27						10/37						4/34					
-Need Updated Technology	4/30						0						0						0					
-Need Staff Development	4/30						3/27						3/37						7/34					
-Need Administrative Support	0/30						0/27						7/37						2/34					

**Figure 5.3.3.b**  
**Componential Analysis: Plot Domain**

teacher to teacher, grade to grade, school to school showed limited district-level influence in this area. Discussions with teachers about assessment at their schools were superficial and defensive. In Chapter Four, each case study includes information about assessment practices and measures. The measurement tools are similar from site to site; however, principals of Star One and Hope Two indicated a more sophisticated knowledge base. At Hope Two having a schoolwide writing rubric and discussions with a first-grade teacher about keeping her students for second grade as a looping strategy were points leading to that conclusion. In addition, the principal of Hope Two said that the school uses several teachers to validate student capabilities, such as the Reading Recovery teacher and the Wiggle Works lab monitor to confirm or disconfirm the classroom teacher's assessments. At Star One student assessment began as soon as students arrived with careful attention to student placement. The guidance counselor played a major role in assessment with diagnostic procedures, but stayed involved in the process by overseeing volunteer tutors. The resource teacher helped classroom teachers with accommodations and modifications for special-needs students. Very important in the overall assessment process, by fourth grade all special-needs students were receiving resource services or relevant accommodations and modifications.

Positioning assessment as a subset of communication is purposeful. It is by design that assessment is used to inform, but not as an end in itself. Assessment is the catalyst for appropriate next steps in learning. With the newly-initiated K-3 Initiative, the district was promoting a balanced reading program whose success depended on ongoing

assessment aligned with curriculum standards. An obvious inconsistency across sites was documenting, organizing, and conveying student information.

The goals for each school were similar, adhering to strict district guidelines for school improvement. Each school wrote a school improvement plan which served as the Title I schoolwide plan as well. The most notable goal at Star One and Hope Two were the reading goals that teachers often discussed. Incentives were an important part of reading goals. The Accelerated Reader Program was in varying stages of implementation at all sites. The Book-it Program with Pizza Hut was a reading-goal program at two of the four schools.

Mandates are ways that responsible parties set expectations. Relevant to this study were mandates from outside the school's jurisdiction. The districtwide revised desegregation court order resulted in major changes in all of the schools in this study except Star Two. Over the past two years the other schools had been adjusting to changes in student body, program offerings, and configuration. Another change came with the K-3 Initiative, a \$2,000,000 districtwide program for students in lower grades. This program was started with great urgency as soon as the funding was approved. Timing was the greatest challenge. Overall the teachers in this study were optimistic about the new early literacy program. The levels of optimism went from guarded at Star One to blatant at Hope One.

An important part of this initiative was the staff development component. The K-3 Initiative, along with school-level half-day monthly meetings, were district mandates.

From school to school the staff development programs were quite similar. Town meetings and school improvement team meetings were included in districtwide mandates.

It turned out that teachers willingly told what they knew about reading instruction. They also willingly listed what they would need to make their jobs more effective as reading teachers.

### **Story Resolution**

In Chapter Four, the case studies of this inquiry were likened to the telling of a story. The themes of setting, character, and plot were used to structure the description of four schools. This chapter began by listing terms included in the cultural domains, continued by explaining relationships among taxonomies, and ended with the dimensions of contrast, to impart the problem element of a typical story. As such, the role assumed by story resolution in literary work, was partially fulfilled in this chapter. Findings from this inquiry and solutions implicit in recommendations for further study are revealed in Chapter Six, thus completing the cycle of story elements.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EPILOGUE, FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Cross-site inquiry into reading instruction in differentially successful Title I schools provided me the opportunity to look closely, listen carefully, document accurately, and now, present what occurred in schools where children were learning to read. Just as importantly, I was afforded the opportunity to employ the same intensity in schools where children reportedly were not learning to read. The following questions served to structure and guide this research study. Frequent review of these questions promoted constancy of purpose in achieving the goals of this research study:

- (a) What resources, time factors, and management systems do elementary teachers use to create an effective reading environment?
- (b) How do reading assessment measures and practices inform instruction?
- (c) Within the context of the school, what is the level of continuity in reading instruction from one classroom to the next?

#### **Findings**

Elementary school teachers are adults who accept responsibility for teaching groups of children to read. In the course of this study, the numbers of students forming groups with one teacher varied from sixteen in some situations to twenty-eight in other situations. There were many instances of isolated interaction between one teacher and one student; but during that one-on-one teaching time, the teacher was responsible for having prepared instructional-level activities for the other twenty-something students in the class. All certified teachers in this study could teach one student to read, one at the

time. Reading instruction becomes a challenge when the one six-year-old student becomes one of twenty-seven six-year-olds in the same confined area for eight hours a day, 180 days a year. Therefore, findings from this inquiry revolve around, emanate from, and fold back into each teacher's ability to lead her students to read by effectively managing their instruction. One teacher, however, is just a part of the bigger picture. Since the unit of analysis for this study is the school, the school administration, namely the principal, was an integral part of the findings.

Given the admission of my bias toward open, student-centered, balanced reading and dynamic assessment practices (Au, Carroll, & Scheu, 1997; Berk & Winsler, 1995; Cheek, Flipppo, & Lindsay, 1997; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996) as described in Chapter Two of this dissertation, it is important to note that in the delivery of reading instruction in this study, no one method, approach, technique, grouping arrangement, instructional material, basal text, or mode of operation was found to prevail solely at any of the sites. Thus, this research did not uncover one methodology that could be suggested as superior to another. I found, not unlike Stringfield, Millsap, and Herman (1997), when they evaluated ten Title I programs across twenty-five sites over a three-year period, that: (a) All programs across sites had strengths, yet there was great variance in implementation, (b) schools obtaining the greatest academic gains paid close attention to issues of initial and long-term implementation, (c) instruction was driven by management issues such as scheduling and uneven access to subjects beyond reading/language arts and mathematics, and (d) not surprisingly, resources were in short supply.

This inquiry addressed three questions about reading instruction in Title I elementary schools. Analysis of field notes structured emerging themes of a story with setting, character, and plot coalescing to form thick descriptions only to be analyzed and restructured like problems in the resolution phase of a story. The following summary of findings relate this study to the solving of a problem in the resolution element of a story cycle.

### Question A

What resources, time factors, and management systems do elementary teachers use to create an effective reading environment?

In responding to what teachers use to create environments conducive to reading instruction, it is worthwhile first to look at what teachers say they need to adequately create these environments. When asked across sites, the highest priority needs reported by teachers were lower pupil to teacher ratio and more books, along with increased consumable materials (see Figure 5.3.3). Human resources as well as materials were resources that teachers reported they value and lack.

Regarding human resources, across sites, scheduling ancillary teachers was the most often employed strategy used to reduce pupil to teacher ratio in reading classes. Yet, effective scheduling and organizing of ancillary teachers' time to benefit student need while meeting school goals was one resource found to be lacking in three of four schools studied. In all schools only the principal with benefit of the whole picture had the power to hire personnel, schedule classes, monitor those classes, and give timely feedback. This cyclical function was apparent only at Star One School.



It was interesting to note that of the schools in the study, when asked to list their needs, Star One had the fewest number of teachers citing lowering pupil to teacher ratio as a need (see Figure 5.3.3). Not to dismiss teachers' stated needs, I suggest that only when personnel already on staff in schools are appropriately utilized should this teacher-stated concern be addressed. Having Fridays away from the students, not planning with classroom teachers, not having regularly scheduled classes, leaving the students unattended with no certified teacher in the room—these are but a few of the types of situations that I observed during the course of this study which prompted this finding. Therefore, lowering the ratio of students to teacher is a management issue, a time issue, and an accountability issue.

With regard to the materials needed, many of the teachers spoke of buying materials with their own funds, writing grants, and enlisting family members to assist with classroom projects. At three of the four schools, the principals were overtly supportive of teachers' getting what they needed for their classes. Teachers are very creative. At Star One they used the old basal texts for skills and the new basal for listening and literature; the TIS at Star Two went to the book depository to get old materials; the TIS at Hope One brought units and the accompanying paraphernalia to "her" teachers. The finding in this study regarding resources was positive with respect to materials and generally bleak with respect to human resources. Staff development as a human resource was relatively similar across sites with teachers complaining about the timing and lack of training in the area of writing.

Use of time was a revealing find. From site to site it was interesting to see how time was managed. Having teachers do morning planning in their classrooms was an excellent way to start the day with students being afforded the opportunity to do review work. As a result, at Star Two, thirty minutes were added to instruction time and twenty-five minutes were added at Star One. Having one recess per day cut down on the lost "pass time." At Star One the grade levels had recess after lunch separate from the rest of the school. Blocking for reading cut down on the ancillary and pull-out interruptions.

An additional time factor was the policy of planning school assemblies by grade level so that they were relevant to student developmental and educational needs. Also, the principal making time to visit each classroom at least once a day reinforced for students why they were at school, especially when she would check their work and make comments about their report cards.

Time for planning with colleagues was another component used to create an effective reading environment. Teachers at Star One came to school fifteen minutes early at least once a week to meet with grade-level teachers for thirty minutes before going to individual classrooms to greet students. Occasionally they would meet during the school day. At other sites in the study, teachers met weekly for an hour during the school day and monthly for a half-day.

Departmentalization in the upper grades was a part of the management system at the two successful schools in this study. Centers as a resurrected mandate in the district drew attention to teachers' lack of skill in the area of classroom management. Only at Star One were the students engaged during center time with adequate and appropriate

activities. There was a rigidity to the process that suggested a controlled introduction of a new management scheme to the students. Students at this school rarely were idle. Yet teachers at Star One, by omitting the element of choice in centers, were not afforded the opportunity to use students' choices as an assessment strategy.

The findings in this study are consistent with those of Brophy (1988) which concluded that academic learning time is influenced by the amount of time students spend engaged in appropriate academic activities; and students' learning is strengthened "when teachers instruct them actively by structuring new information and helping them relate it to what they already know, and then monitoring their performance and providing corrective feedback" (Brophy, 1988, p. 275).

#### Question B

How do reading assessment measures and practices inform instruction?

Historically, most assessment has been directed to the outcomes of instruction (Calfee, 1996). We wait until the end of the instruction sequence before we assess: monitoring for national performance, assessing effectiveness of schools and teachers, and assessing elementary school outcome achievements. "When we measure the outcomes of teaching with important tests the instruction of learners is already over" (Clay, 1993). If we try to use those results to improve instruction, we can only guess what factors produced the scores and guess further how to change our policies for corrective actions. Effective teaching calls for assessment designed to record how the student works on tasks and to inform teaching as it occurs (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsay, 1997; Clay, 1993).

In response to questions about assessment practices, teachers across sites were defensive and vague. As the study progressed and data were analyzed, it became apparent that assessment was a weak link in the instructional chain within each school, albeit at varying degrees. For example, Hope Two had a schoolwide writing component in the language arts program undergirded by the writing rubric, and Star One had a more comprehensive school assessment design which was more school level than classroom engendered. At Star One School, from the time a student registered throughout his or her academic experience there was ongoing formal assessment. As soon as problems began to appear, teachers would go to the guidance counselor, who did language processing, I.Q., and dyslexia screening. Once a problem was detected it would be addressed. Any child who did not qualify for special services was provided with special accommodations and modifications in his or her instructional program. Volunteers who tutor students at the school work under the direction of the guidance counselor. Their work was monitored, and they were given feedback. But these are not informal assessment practices that guide classroom instruction (Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsay, 1997).

Teachers used varying informal and intuitive assessment measures as a part of reading class. For some, making a running record of students' reading miscues helped to set up next-steps in reading instruction; for others informal reading inventories were given to ascertain instructional reading levels; yet, in many classes all students were instructed using the same grade-level basal. On Fridays, many teachers tested, did pre- to post-testing in skill grouping, and gave basal unit tests. Most of the teachers spent much

instruction time in standardized test preparation, a strategy that placed higher value on measuring outcomes than utilizing assessments to guide teaching (Clay, 1993).

Another disappointing find across the sites was the lack of continuity from grade to grade within each school regarding policies for documenting students' progress, organizing work samples, setting uniform standards for showcase portfolios, and making decisions about what pertinent documents should be included in a literacy folder for charting and communicating student progress.

There was, however, a positive indication that the district was beginning to approach informal student assessment as a viable and necessary partner to formal assessment. This assumption is made with the inclusion of portfolio assessment as a component of the districtwide K-3 Initiative.

### Question C

Within the context of the school, what is the level of continuity in reading instruction from one classroom to the next?

Having continuity from classroom to classroom was evident at one school which contributed to that school's sense of unity. Regardless of each teacher's theoretical orientation in reading instruction, demonstrating similar pedagogy at grade level appeared an important key to children learning to read at Star One School. Within the walls of each school studied, there were teachers with differing theoretical orientations in reading instruction. Yet, in the successful schools, teachers planned and implemented similarly. At Star One, teachers planned together for the purpose of implementing like-programs and used time wisely so as not to take away from instruction time with students. The

quality of instruction at most grade levels was high, classroom management skills were rated high, demonstrating consistency within the grade levels. Data from Star One School fit the image of a successful school as defined in a 1994 research report. Findings from a study of twenty-one highly regarded Title I Schools done by Pechman and Fiester (1994) revealed that successful schools build on a framework that includes the following eight features. The first six of these features were evident at Star One School; the remaining two may have been present, but did not emerge in the course of the study: (a) shared vision, (b) time and resources for planning and program implementation, (c) skillful management and a well-defined organizational structure, (d) clear focus on academics, (e) continuing professional development, (f) commitment to cultural inclusion, (g) parent and community involvement, and (h) accountability orientation.

Factors supporting continuity from classroom to classroom at Star One School were low absenteeism, high stability, and advanced degrees among faculty, along with a highly visible, established principal. These factors were foundational to the relative lack of discipline problems at the school which lead to teachers' high expectations implicit in their positive comments about students who attend "their" school.

Woven through the Star Two reading program was active participation of the school librarian. Her immersion in the instructional program is an indication that fundamental beliefs and counter-designed district mandates can co-exist. Over a seven-year period she has been involved in reading programs from single basal to literature-based to K-3 Initiative, and she continued to have a prevailing presence in schoolwide reading instruction.

At the two successful schools, the principals were reluctant to make rapid, wholesale programmatic changes. This finding suggested that caution with district mandates helped to build confidence with teachers. Veteran teachers were quick to point out, "We have seen programs come and go."

### **Summary**

This multiple-case qualitative inquiry focused on the inner workings of schools where students placed at risk learned to read, and examined schools where similar students did not learn to read. Research conducted in four elementary schools addressed the following questions: (a) What resources, time factors, and management systems do elementary teachers use to create an effective reading environment? (b) How do reading assessment measures and practices inform instruction? (c) Within the school context, what is the level of continuity in reading instruction from one classroom to the next?

The case studies included factors in schools that affect student learning. Four general findings emerged in response to the research questions. First, material resources were in short supply, and teachers did not utilize instructional-level appropriate materials to facilitate independent work. Human resources were squandered. In the majority of cases, ancillary teacher behaviors were counterproductive to student learning. These support personnel were scheduled inefficiently and were inadequately monitored. In a more positive light, frequent principal classroom visitations impacted student and teacher performance. Second, management and use of time were not maximized in the two unsuccessful schools. In the two successful schools, learning time was extended by thirty minutes each day as a result of efficient time management; upper grades were

departmentalized; and at one school, pull-out rather than inclusion was implemented for specialized instruction. Third, assessment practices limited rather than informed instruction. Teachers used intuition for informal assessment and inconsistent documentation for reporting.

Finally, continuity was apparent at only one site, Star One School, where grade-level teachers implemented like-reading instruction within each of the six grade levels. As the data were analyzed and reported, it appeared that there was only one truly successful school in this study, Star One School.

Several aspects of the Star One instructional program worthy of consideration for transferability to other school sites include: principal as the main teacher; continuous assessment driven by the guidance counselor; no foreign language instruction; departmentalized upper-level instruction; classrooms monitored by the principal for team teaching or, if not possible, use of pull-out instruction to meet special student needs; coordination of school programs and field trips with curriculum standards; academic-focused non-class time with the teacher; and explicit articulation of expectations with communication mechanism for feedback.

### **Implications for Further Study**

This qualitative study serves as a catalyst for further study by providing findings that are specific to four school sites. Defining cause and effect relationships was not the intent of this inquiry. Thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) were presented for the construction of meaning about the setting, character, and plot at these sites, not for generalizability of the findings. The transferability of outcomes from this inquiry must



be determined by other professionals who wish to apply these outcomes to other situations.

The areas of focus for this inquiry were quite broad, lending support to a need for further in-depth study of issues impacting students' learning to read. From this inductive investigation, several quantitative research projects could be designed with the intention of meeting positivistic validity and reliability standards of generalizability. Several topics for further study might include: time on task of ancillary personnel in elementary reading instruction, comparison between departmentalized and self-contained reading instruction in upper-elementary grades, center utilization correlated to increased student reading ability, teachers' theoretical orientation in reading instruction and mandated methodology correlated to student achievement, the relationship of principal time spent with students to achievement, and, finally, an in-depth qualitative look at literacy learning through the communicative and visual arts focusing on the use of technology.

As a result of an obvious void across sites, the area most in need of comprehensive study is assessment. Although there was limited use of fundamental informal assessment practices, there was no evidence of teachers using the computer as a tool for electronic assessment.

### **Epilogue**

The function of a continuity title in a motion picture is to introduce change in time, place, or circumstance to the narrative. An oft-employed continuity title, "the end," cues that a piece has drawn to a close, prompting a change of circumstance. Hopefully,

the end of this work signals a time for new beginnings and makes a modest contribution to influence a change in circumstance for students placed at risk.

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# **APPENDIX A INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES**

FREE/REDUCED-PRICE  
LUNCH  
Income Eligibility Guidelines  
(Rev. 3/97)

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES (Effective from July 1, 1997, to June 30, 1998)						
THESE ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS TO BE ISSUED TO MEDIA AND DETERMINING OFFICIALS ONLY. THIS SHOULD NOT ACCOMPANY THE LETTER TO PARENTS.						
FAMILY SIZE	ELIGIBLE FOR FREE MEALS IF FAMILY INCOME IS AT OR BELOW:			ELIGIBLE FOR REDUCED PRICE MEALS IF FAMILY INCOME IS AT OR BELOW:		
	Annual	Monthly	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Weekly
1	\$ 10,257	\$ 855	\$ 198	\$ 14,587	\$ 1,217	\$ 281
2	13,793	1,160	268	19,629	1,636	378
3	17,328	1,446	334	24,681	2,056	476
4	20,865	1,738	402	28,693	2,476	572
5	24,401	2,034	470	34,725	2,894	688
6	27,937	2,329	538	39,757	3,314	765
7	31,473	2,623	606	44,788	3,733	862
8	35,009	2,918	674	49,821	4,152	959
For each additional family member add	+ 3,536	+295	+ 68	+5,032	+ 420	+ 97

Eligibility determinations based on income are made by family, that is, all children in the same family attending schools under the jurisdiction of the same School Food Authority are to receive the same benefits. Children who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches are also eligible for free or reduced price breakfasts under the School Breakfast Program. An application must be completed unless the child(ren) has(have) been directly certified.

TO COMPUTE MONTHLY INCOME: Weekly x 4.33 Every 2 Weeks x 2.16 Twice a Month x 2

1 15000000 50 000000 0 15

## APPENDIX B STAR ONE SCHOOL

### READ INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT Title I SCHOOL PROFILE for Star One Elementary School

#### Faculty and Staff Characteristics:

1. Name of Principal Ms. xxxxxxxxx
2. Number of years serving in the role of principal 6
3. Number of principals serving this school over the last 10 years (including 1996-97): 2
4. Average number of years of teaching experience of faculty at the school (faculty tenure) 16
5. Teacher Information

TEACHER	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
# of Teachers	42	39	N/A
% Master Degree/Higher	40.48	38.46	N/A

#### FACULTY DATA:

Data	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Student Population	568	549	559
% Free Lunch	70.0%	72.1%	69%
% Black/White/Other	58/42	57/43	66/34
%Average Daily Attendance	96.33	96.63	94.5
%/# Suspensions	1.83 12	0.00	17
%/# Expulsions	0.00	0.00	0.00
%/# Retentions	35	22	17
Standardized (NRT) Achievement Scores Grade/Score	64.0	68.8	69
LEAP (CRT) Scores Grade/Score	3 <sup>rd</sup> 94 % passed Lang 95% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 99% passed Lang 100% passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 94% passed Lang 97% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 98% passed Lang 98% passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 98% passed Lang 91% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 100 % passed Lang 100% passed Math
Special Ed	11	15	19
Gifted	0	0	0
Relative Performance Indicator Residual Score	Not Available	Not Available	+1.2797

## APPENDIX C STAR TWO SCHOOL

### READ INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT Title I SCHOOL PROFILE for Star Two Elementary School

**Faculty and Staff Characteristics:**

1. Name of Principal Ms. 00000000
2. Number of years serving in the role of principal 3
3. Number of principals serving this school over the last 10 years (including 1996-97): 2
4. Average number of years of teaching experience of faculty at the school (faculty tenure) 14

**Teacher Information**

TEACHER	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
# of Teachers	32	33	N/A
% Master Degree/Higher	46.88	56.25	N/A

**FACULTY DATA:**

Student Population	384	322	333
% Free Lunch	81.2	83.9	92
% Black/White/Other	100 / 0	100 / 0	100 / 0
% Average Daily Attendance	96.36	95.48	95.8
%/# Suspensions	0.26 1	0.00	5
%/# Expulsions	0.26 1	0.00	0.00
%/# Retentions	22	23	26
Standardized (NRT) Achievement Scores Grade/Score	38.0	57.5	64
LEAP (CRT)	3 <sup>rd</sup> 87% passed Lang 75% passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 66% passed Lang 76% passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 85% passed Lang 79% passed Math
Scores Grade/Score	5 <sup>th</sup> 65% passed Lang 84% passed Math	5 <sup>th</sup> 81% passed Lang 90 passed Math	5 <sup>th</sup> 76 % passed Lang 84% passed Math
Special Ed	7	6	7
Gifted	0	0	0
Relative Performance Indicator Residual Score	Not Available	Not Available	0.682

## APPENDIX D HOPE TWO SCHOOL

### READ INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

#### Faculty and Staff Characteristics:

1. Name of Principal Ms. oxoxoxoxox
2. Number of years serving in the role of principal 9
3. Number of principals serving this school over the last 10 years (including 1996-97): 2
4. Average number of years of teaching experience of faculty at the school (faculty tenure) 15
5. Teacher Information

TEACHER	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
# of Teachers	37	37	N/A
% Master Degree/Higher	54.05	50.00	N/A

#### FACULTY DATA:

Data	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Student Population	427	429	427
% Free Lunch	45.6	47.6	51
% Black/White/Other	42 / 58	46 / 54	72 / 28
%Average Daily Attendance	96.31	95.82	94.7
%/# Suspensions	1.39 6	0.00	10
%/# Expulsions	0.00	0.00	3
%/# Retentions	18	11	32
Standardized (NRT) Achievement Scores Grade/Score	83.3	81.3	28
LEAP (CRT) Scores Grade/Score	3 <sup>rd</sup> 97% passed Lang 92% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 96% passed Lang 99% passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 96% passed Lang 94% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 93% passed Lang 91 passed Math	3 <sup>rd</sup> 83% passed Lang 77% passed Math 5 <sup>th</sup> 65 % passed Lang 85% passed Math
Special Ed	12	12	26
Gifted	114	95	0
Relative Performance Indicator Residual Score	Not Available	Not Available	-1.3583

**APPENDIX E  
HOPE ONE SCHOOL**

**READ INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Title I SCHOOL PROFILE for Hope One Elementary School**

**Faculty and Staff Characteristics:**

1. Name of Principal Ms. xoxoxoxo.
2. Number of years serving in the role of principal 0
3. Number of principals serving this school over the last 10 years (including 1996-97): 1
4. Average number of years of teaching experience of faculty at the school (faculty tenure) 16
5. Teacher Information

TEACHER	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
# of Teachers	24	25	N/A
% Master Degree/Higher	58.33	56.52	N/A

**FACULTY DATA:**

Data	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Student Population	258	200	206
% Free Lunch	78.2	86.50	90
% Black/White/Other	91 / 9	90 / 10	99 / 1
%Average Daily Attendance	97.09	96.79	96.7
%/# Suspensions	0.00	0.00	5
%/# Expulsions	0.00	0.00	0.00
%/# Retentions	1	0	5 Available 3/98
Standardized (NRT) Achievement Scores Grade/Score	24.5	19.0	22
LEAP (CRT) Scores Grade/Score	5 <sup>th</sup> 80% passed Lang 77% passed Math	5 <sup>th</sup> 65% passed Lang 61% passed Math	5 <sup>th</sup> 60 % passed Lang 67% passed Math
Special Ed	18	25	17
Gifted	0	0	0
Relative Performance Indicator Residual Score	Not Available	Not Available	-1.8554

**APPENDIX F**  
**PERMISSION LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*8942 Rue Felicity Court  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70809  
504-292-7773 phone/fax*

December 22, 1997

Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, Director  
Planning, Evaluation, Research, and Development  
Read Independent School District  
P.O. Box 0000, Louisiana 70821  
Read Parish, Louisiana

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ :

I am requesting approval to conduct a dissertation research project with professional staff in four Title I elementary schools in the district for the purpose of studying the implementation of reading instruction using the school as the unit of analysis. As I mentioned to you on the phone, I have spoken with Mr. Xxxxx and Mrs. Oooo who assisted in the selection of the schools for study. I am in the process of seeking permission from the principals of the recommended schools: Star One Elementary, Star Two Elementary, Hope One Elementary, and Hope Two Elementary Schools.

The following data collection protocols will be used: teacher observations, principal and teacher interviews, and teacher focus groups. For observations I will use Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence and Stallings *Revised Classroom Snapshot* (Attachment A), for interviewing I will utilize Patton's guided interview approach (Attachment B), and for teacher focus groups, questions are listed in Attachment C. I will also use archive data (school improvement plans, lesson plans, assessment measures, student data, etc.) in an effort to triangulate data type and data analysis procedures.

I met with Dr. Cheek, my major professor, last week for help in finalizing my research questions and methodology. He and Dr. Teddlie are helping to guide my study which will take approximately 60 hours per site to be conducted during the months of February, March, and April (1998). All information is confidential and pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of findings which I plan to submit to your office upon approval from the Graduate School.

Please feel free to contact me at 292-7773, and I will gladly answer any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gypsye Bryan, Doctoral Candidate

C:       Mrs. Xxxx  
          Mr. Ooo

**APPENDIX G**  
**PERMISSION LETTER FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**School System**

January 12, 1998

**MEMO TO:** Gypseye Bryan, Doctoral Candidate  
8942 Rue Felicity Court  
Baton Rouge, La. 70809

**FROM:** Dr. [REDACTED] Director [REDACTED]  
Planning, Evaluation, Research, and Development  
Curriculum and Instruction

**SUBJECT:** *Letter of Permission to Conduct Study  
Implementation of Reading Instruction*

After reviewing your request to conduct the investigation described in your proposal, you have permission to begin your study. Authorization to conduct this study is granted with the following stipulations:

1. The principals of the schools agree to participate. The principal must be given a copy of this memo. Provide this office the names of schools agreeing to participate immediately.
2. This department will receive two (2) copies of the completed study.

This authorization is based on the information submitted to this office. If you should deviate from the proposal, please contact this office.

If you have any questions, contact me at [REDACTED].

Approved: [REDACTED], Associate Superintendent  
[REDACTED] Office of Curriculum and Instruction

xc: Dr. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

*Quality and Equity: Our Children Are the Reason*

An Equal  
Opportunity  
Employer

**APPENDIX H**  
**APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM IRB OVERSIGHT FOR STUDIES**  
**CONDUCTED IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS LSU COLLEGE OF**  
**EDUCATION**

**Application for Exemption from IRB (Institutional Review Board)**  
**Oversight for Studies Conducted in Educational Settings**  
**LSU COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

Title of Study: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name (Print)

Faculty Supervisor : \_\_\_\_\_  
 (if student project) Name (Print)

Dates of proposed project period: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

ITEM	YES	NO
1. This study will be conducted in an established or commonly accepted educational setting (schools, universities, summer programs, etc.)		
2. This study will involve children under the age of 18.		
3. This study will involve educational practices such as instructional strategies or comparison among educational techniques, curricula, or classroom management strategies.		
4. This study will involve educational testing (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement).		
5. This study will use data, documents, or records that existed prior to the study.		
6. This study will use surveys or interviews concerning content that is <u>not</u> related to instructional practices.		
7. This study will involve procedures other than those described in numbers 3,4,5 or 6. If yes, describe: _____		
8. This study will deal with sensitive aspects of subjects' and/or subjects' families' lives, such as sexual behavior or use of alcohol or other drugs.		
9. Data will be recorded so that the subjects cannot be identified by anyone other than the researcher.		
10. Informed consent of subject 18 and older, and/or of the parent/guardian of minor children, will be obtained.		
11. Assent of minors (under age 18) will be obtained. (Answer if #2 above is YES)		
12. Approval for this study will be obtained from the appropriate authority in the educational setting.		

Attach an abstract of the study and a copy of the consent form(s) to be used. If your answer(s) to numbers 6 and/or 7 is(are) YES, attach a copy of any surveys, interview protocols, or other procedures to be used.



## ASSURANCES

As the principal investigator for the proposed research study, I assure that the following conditions will be met:

1. The human subjects are volunteers.
2. Subjects know that they have the freedom to withdraw at any time.
3. The data collected will not be used for any purpose not approved by the subjects.
4. The subjects are guaranteed confidentiality.
5. The subjects will be informed beforehand as to the nature of their activity.
6. The nature of the activity will not cause any physical or psychological harm to the subjects.
7. Individual performances will not be disclosed to persons other than those involved in the research and authorized by the subject.
8. If minors are to participate in this research, valid consent will be obtained beforehand from parents or guardians.
9. All questions will be answered to the satisfaction of the subjects.
10. Volunteers will consent by signature if over the age of 6.

### Principal Investigator Statement:

I have read and agree to abide by the standards of the Belmont Report and the Louisiana State University policy on the use of human subjects. I will advise the Office of the Dean and the University's Human Subject Committee in writing of any significant changes in the procedures detailed above.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Faculty Supervisor Statement (for student research projects):

I have read and agree to abide by the standards of the Belmont Report and the Louisiana State University policy on the use of human subjects. I will supervise the conduct of the proposed project in accordance with federal guidelines for Human Protection. I will advise the Office of the Dean and the University's Human Subject Committee in writing of any significant changes in the procedures detailed above.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Reviewer recommendation:

\_\_\_\_\_ exemption from IRB oversight. (File this signed application in the Dean's Office.)

\_\_\_\_\_ expedited review for minimal risk protocol. (Follow IRB regulations and submit 3 copies to the Dean's Office.)

\_\_\_\_\_ full review. (Follow IRB regulations and submit 13 copies to the Dean's Office.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Authorized Reviewer (Print) /

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

/ Date

# REVISED CLASSROOM SNAPSHOT

School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Aides \_\_\_\_\_

Other Adults \_\_\_\_\_

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

START END

**Directions:** For each classroom scan, count the number of children engaged in interactive, non-interactive, and off-task activities. Write that number in the appropriate boxes.

TIME PERIOD	TIME 1	TIME 2	TIME 3	TIME 4	TIME 5	TIME 6	TIME 7
<b>Interactive Time on Task</b> Reading Aloud, Making Assignments, Instruction/Explanation, Discussion/Reviewing Assignments, Practice Drill, Taking Test/Drill							
<b>Non-Interactive Time on Task</b> Reading Silently, Written Assignment, Students working together without direct adult supervision							
<b>Off Task</b> Social Interacting, Student Uninvolved, Being Disciplined, Classroom Management							
<b>Total Number of Students</b>							

# APPENDIX J

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

### SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

#### CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

School \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

II. DOMAIN: MANAGEMENT						
Attributes		1	2	3	4	Comments
II A1. Organizes available space materials, and/or equipment to facilitate learning.						
II A2. Promotes a positive learning climate.						
II B1. Manages routines and transitions in a timely manner.						
II B2. Manages and/or adjusts allotted time for activities planned.						
II C1. Establishes expectations for learner behaviors.						
II C2. Uses monitoring techniques to facilitate learning.						
III: INSTRUCTION						
Attributes	N/O	1	2	3	4	Comments
III A1. Uses technique(s) which develop(s) lesson objective(s).						
III A2. Sequences lessons to promote learning.						
III A3. Uses available teaching material(s) to achieve lesson objective(s)						
III A4. Adjusts lesson when appropriate.						
III B1. Presents content at a developmentally appropriate level.						
III B2. Presents accurate subject matter.						
III B3. Relates relevant examples, unexpected situations, or current events to the content.						
III C1. Accommodates individual differences						
III C2. Demonstrates ability to communicate effectively with students						
III C3. Stimulates and encourages higher order thinking at the appropriate developmental level.						
III C4. Encourages student participation						
III D2. Monitors ongoing performance of students.						
III D3. Provides timely feedback to students regarding their progress.						

Ratings: NO : Not Observed. 1: Unsatisfactory 2: Needs Improvement 3: Area of Strengths 4: Demonstrates Excellence

## **APPENDIX K**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **General Questions**

1. How many years of teaching experience? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many years at present school? \_\_\_\_\_ School district? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your highest degree earned? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what areas are you certified to teach?
5. In what staff development activities are you engaged?
6. What is the nature of the Title I Schoolwide Program at your school? How are you involved in the school's plan for improvement?
7. Are you involved in school improvement activities? \_\_\_\_\_ What is your feeling about teacher participation in school governance issues?
8. What do you feel are your most valued contributions to the school? What do you think others' feel about your contributions?
9. Describe the principal's participation in classroom activities?

#### **Reading Instruction Related Questions**

1. According to your professional judgment, what is needed to create an effective environment for successful reading? What interactive, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic teaching resources are necessary? How does this school provide these resources?
2. How do your grade level cohorts set up their reading environments?
3. How do teachers across grade levels set up their environments? Is there a general feeling of continuity among upper and lower level teachers?
4. Describe a typical reading lesson. What would you be doing? What would the students be experiencing?
5. Discuss the interruptions you have during a reading lesson? Are students pulled out of reading class? How often are guidance, music, physical education, or library scheduled during your reading block?
6. How do you think most of your students learn to read (phonics, whole word, whole language)? What strategies do you use with the reluctant reader?
7. What assessment measures do you incorporate in your reading program? How do you organize assessment information about each student? For what purposes do you assess students?
8. As a teacher responsible for students becoming successful readers, what are three actions that would help the school improve overall reading instruction for all students?

## **APPENDIX L**

### **FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

1. **Tell me about the children who attend this school?**
2. **Describe the Title I Schoolwide Program at this school?**
3. **How do teachers view this school? Do they consider it a good school?**
4. **How does the principal see her role in the school? Is she often seen in the classroom interacting with students and teachers? Is there anything the principal does exceptionally well in the area of curriculum and instruction?**
5. **Could you describe the reading curriculum at this school? Are there problems with implementing the reading curriculum K-5? How do teachers modify the curriculum in the classroom? At grade level? Across grade levels?**
6. **How would you describe an effective learning environment for successful reading? In what ways are you afforded the resources, time, and training to create such an environment?**
7. **How is reading assessment managed? How do teachers communicate about student learning to one another? What assessment measures are utilized? How are assessment strategies aligned with curriculum?**
8. **What do you think are the positive ways this school promotes successful reading instruction?**
9. **What do you think are the ways the school impedes the teaching of reading?**
10. **What would you do to make this school better at producing successful readers? Is there anything the faculty can do? The district can do?**

## **APPENDIX M**

### **DOMAIN ANALYSIS**

#### **Setting**

---

*is a way to describe the*

---

no continuity  
physical plant  
classroom arrangement  
desk arrangement  
appearance  
centers  
computers  
overhead  
clock  
climate  
well-run  
good  
leadership  
united faculty  
group planning  
cafeteria as quiet zone  
bad reputation  
progressive  
supportive administration  
good principal  
children not prepared  
children in classroom at 8:15 a.m.  
Gap between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade  
departmentalized 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades  
loud  
climate  
mode of operation  
rolling cart of reference books  
basal texts  
multiple copies of leveled books  
pencil sharpening  
test preparation material  
words every where  
environmental print  
multi-sensory material  
teacher-owned resources  
art easel  
board work  
pillows  
literature around the room

# Character

---

*is a way to describe a*

---

goal-oriented  
 absent  
 generous  
 writes grants  
 gives parent workshops  
 shares with faculty  
 responsive to children  
 angry  
 ancillary teacher  
 human resource  
 belief systems  
 frustrated  
 doesn't like to teach reading  
 loves job  
 loves school  
 smart  
 appreciate  
 established  
 visible  
 angry  
 economically disadvantaged  
 no discipline  
 crack baby  
 experienced  
 novice  
 sharing  
 reading teacher  
 librarian  
 principal  
 teacher  
 computer monitor  
 parent liaison  
 teach the way I was taught  
 been here so long  
 make banners  
 work hard  
 close together  
 doesn't work on birthday  
 comes early  
 disengaged

## Plot

---

*is a part of the*

---

every grade different  
 send kids down for leveled reading  
 transition from single basal  
 CCC lab for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders  
 reading strategies across content  
 cooking  
 DEAR every day  
 drama  
 reading/writing connection  
 GED program for parents  
 looping  
 reward with computer time  
 plays  
 webbing  
 Venn Diagram  
 pantomime  
 whisper reading  
 music/art connection  
 listen to kids read 3 times per week  
 Buddying  
 whole class instruction  
 group instruction  
 balanced reading  
 flexible grouping  
 centers  
 author's chair  
 Title I inclusion  
 Title I pull-out  
 teacher release for planning  
 ancillary morning duty  
 teacher determines ancillary schedule, role  
 instructional goals  
 traditional basal technique  
 balanced reading strategies  
 skills based  
 story mapping  
 creative writing  
 genre  
 Friday testing  
 Haiku



## **APPENDIX N**

### **TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS**

#### **1. Cultural Domain: SETTING**

##### **a. PLACE**

###### **School**

- (1) Community**
  - (a) Rural**
  - (b) Suburban**
  - (c) Inner-city**
  - (d) Suburban-rural**
- (2) Rooms**
  - (a) Classrooms**
    - (i) Appearance**
      - 1) Neat**
      - 2) Messy**
    - (ii) Centers**
  - (b) Library**
    - (i) Collection**
    - (ii) Circulation**
    - (iii) scheduling**
      - 1) none**
      - 2) flexible**
      - 3) weekly**
  - (c) Cafeteria**
    - (i) Quiet zone**
- (3) Configuration**
  - (a) Departmentalized**
  - (b) Transition class**
  - (c) Combination class**
- (4) Contents**
  - (a) Instructional material by purpose**
    - (i) Organize environment**
    - (ii) Facilitate multi-sensory**
    - (iii) Teach specific skill**
  - (b) Desk placement**
    - (i) Linear arrangement**
    - (ii) Round arrangement**
  - (c) Books**

- (i) Basal old
- (ii) Basal new
- (iii) Caldecott and Newbery winners
- (iv) Multiple copies/multi-leveled

- (d) Other
  - (i) Candy cart

- (i) TIME
  - (i) Number of recesses
  - (ii) Interruptions
    - (i) School Improvement Team Meetings
    - (ii) Intercom
    - (iii) Assemblies
  - (iii) Teacher Planning
    - (i) Individual
    - (ii) Grade level
      - (i) During school - 1 hour
      - (ii) Before school - ½ hour
      - (iii) monthly - ½ day
  - (iv) Principal time in classroom
    - (i) 5 times a week
    - (ii) 3 times a week
    - (iii) 1 time a week
    - (iv) As required
  - (v) Idle Time
    - (i) Student Time on Task (TOT)

## 2. Cultural Domain: CHARACTER

- a. Central
  - i. Students
    - (1) Negative descriptors
      - (a) lack experiences
      - (b) economically disadvantaged
      - (c) no discipline
      - (d) group organizer
      - (e) crack babies
      - (f) alcohol syndrome
    - (2) Positive descriptors
      - (a) well-disciplined
      - (b) smart

- (c) value education
- (d) from professional families

**b. Main**

**i. Classroom Teachers**

- (1) Theoretical orientation
- (2) Base data
  - (a) Average years at school
    - (i) Star One - 14 years
    - (ii) Star Two - 5.3
    - (iii) Hope Two - 7.5
    - (iv) Hope One - 3.3
  - (b) Advanced degree
    - (i) Star One - 46%
    - (ii) Star Two - 33%
    - (iii) Hope Two - 45%
    - (iv) Hope One 33%
  - (c) Absenteeism
    - (i) Star One - Low
    - (ii) Star Two - High
    - (iii) Hope Two - High
    - (iv) Hope One - High

**ii. Principal**

- (1) Years as principal
  - (a) Star One - 6 years
  - (b) Star Two - 4 years
  - (c) Hope Two - 11 years
  - (d) Hope One - ½ year

**b. Supporting**

**i. Ancillary**

- (1) Content
  - (a) Dyslexia specialist
  - (b) Librarian
  - (c) Guidance
  - (d) Music
  - (e) Physical education
- (2) Classroom Support
  - (a) Help with reading
  - (b) Disjointed schedule
    - (i) Teachers decide
    - (ii) Principal decides
- (3) Other responsibilities
  - (a) Duty
  - (b) Sell candy

**ii. Teacher for Instructional Support (TIS)**

- (1) Other
- (2) Parents
- (3) Volunteers
- (4) Student Teachers
- (5) Non-certificated Personnel
- (6) Administrative Intern

**3. Cultural Domain: PLOT**

**a. Instructional Practices**

- i. **Grouping**
  - (1) Whole class
  - (2) Ability grouping
  - (3) Flexible grouping
  - (4) Skills grouping
  - (5) Extended day
- ii. **Methods**
  - (1) **Balanced reading**
    - (a) Guided reading
    - (b) Read aloud
    - (c) Shared reading
    - (d) Familiar reread
    - (e) Phonics
    - (f) Centers
  - (2) **Basal reading**
    - (g) Teacher directed lesson
    - (h) Follow up work
    - (i) Independent work
    - (j) Centers
  - (3) **Literature based**
  - (4) **Balanced writing**
    - (k) Shared Writing
    - (l) Model Writing
    - (m) Writer's Workshop
    - (n) Wiggle Works
- iii. **LCET**

**b. Communication**

- i. **Assessment**
  - (1) **Practices**
    - (a) **Schoolwide**
      - (i) Looping
      - (ii) Student placement
      - (iii) documentation

- 1). individual folders
    - 2). class checklist
  - (2) Measures
    - School charts
- ii. Goals
  - (1) Accelerated Reader
  - (2) Book-it with Pizza Hut
  - (3) School Reading Goal
- iii. Mandates
  - (1) Desegregation Consent Decree
  - (2) K-3 Initiative
  - (3) Staff development
    - (a) Timing
      - ½ day per month
    - (b) Topics
      - (i) PPS
      - (ii) Exxon Math
  - (4) Grade level planning
    - (a) 1 hour per week during school
    - (b) ½ hour per week before school
    - (c) ½ day per month during school
  - (5) Town Meeting
  - (6) School Improvement Team/Plan
- (iv) Needs
- (v) Other
  - (1) Student assemblies
  - (2) Teacher Buddies
  - (3) Parent workshops
  - (4) GED preparation

## **VITA**

**Gypsye Dugas Bryan attended elementary and high school at Saint Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she lived from the age of four with the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille at the convent school. The sisters were responsible for her acquiring English as her second language inasmuch as Cajun French was the primary language spoken in her native southwest Louisiana home of Parks, Louisiana. She attended Louisiana State University, where she received her bachelor of arts degree in sociology. After several years as a homemaker, she entered Southern University in Baton Rouge where she received her master of education degree. She was employed as an elementary classroom teacher in East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System for three years while working on her education specialist degree, which she received from Louisiana State University in 1978. While continuing to work for the same school system in several different capacities, Gypsye obtained additional certification as a reading specialist, second language specialist in French, English as a second language specialist, kindergarten teacher, principal, supervisor, and program evaluator.**

**Gypsye has held several administrative positions in the East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System over the past twenty-five years: instructional specialist, bilingual program manager, director of development, director on the instructional team, and presently, director in the district Title I program. She has been actively pursuing her doctor of philosophy degree since June 1995.**

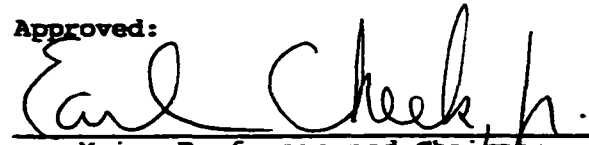
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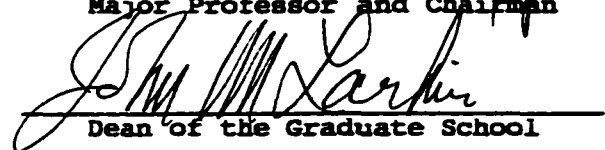
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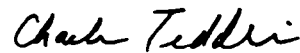
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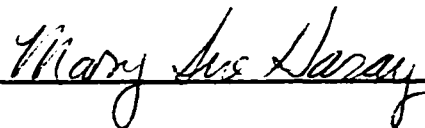
  
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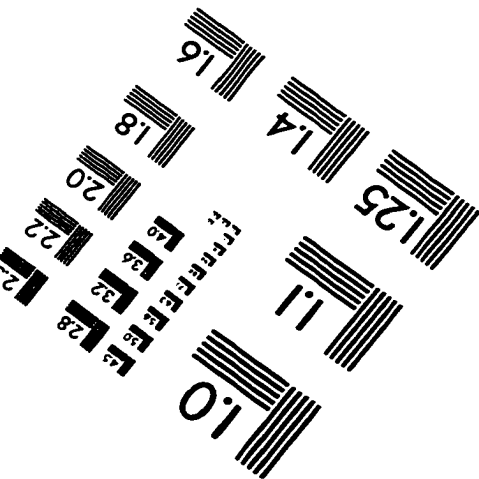
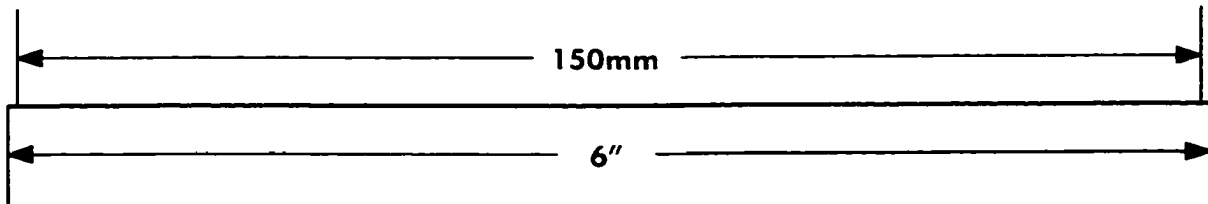
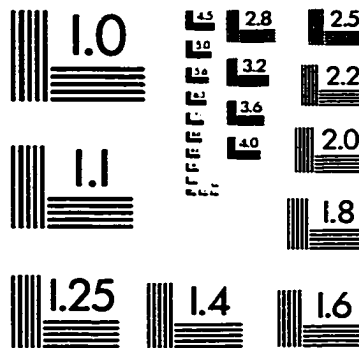
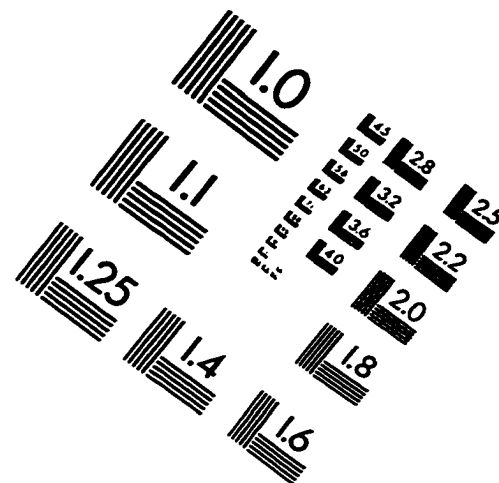
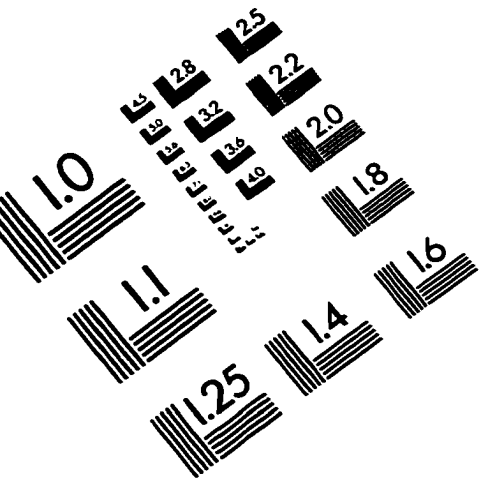
  
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